



# STUDIES IN GANDHISM

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

**Indian Associated Publishing Co. Ltd.**

**Book-Sellers & Publishers**

**8C, RAMANATH MAZUMDAR STREET,  
CALCUTTA.**

Published by  
JARENDRA NATH CHATTERJEE  
8C, Ramanath Mazumdar St.  
Calcutta

Printed by  
A. BHUR at the SAKTI PRESS  
27/3B, Hari Ghosh Street,  
Calcutta.

## INTRODUCTION

These essays were published in various journals at different periods ; so there has been some amount of unavoidable repetition here and there. I have been chiefly interested in the economic and political ideas of Mahatma Gandhi. This has naturally led to an emphasis on certain aspects of his teachings at the expense of others. Many may not like this ; but the purpose of this publication will be served if it succeeds in stimulating those interested in the subject into an ampler reading and a more correct appreciation of what Gandhiji really stands for.

My thanks are due to the editors of *The Viswabharati Quarterly*, *The Modern Review* and the *Forward*, for kind permission to reprint the articles from their journals. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my friend Sj. Krishna Kripalani, for it was mainly due to his enthusiasm and encouragement that many of the present studies were undertaken.

1/1A, Ananda Chatterji Lane, }  
Calcutta, 15.9.1940.

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE



## CONTENTS

1. The Case for an Intellectual Movement to support Gandhism	...	...	1
2. The Philosophy and Technique of Satyagraha	...		6
3. Is Satyagraha Played Out ?	...	...	28
4. Satyagraha : a Dead Weapon by V. G. Kulkarni	...		32
5. Our Differences	...	...	36
6. An Interview with Mahatma Gandhi	...		40
7. Gandhiji on Machines	...	...	47
8. Gandhi on Industrialism and Machinery	...		52
9. Gandhi on Riches and Rich Men	...		63
10. Gandhi on the State	...	...	77
11. Gandhi's Contribution to Indian Social Ideals	...		87
12. The Nature of Gandhi's Idealism	...		93
13. The Quintessence of Gandhism	...	...	101
14. Gandhi and Lenin	...	...	106



## REFERENCES

*Auto.*—The Story of My Experiments with Truth, by M. K. Gandhi. Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad. Vol. I. 1927 and Vol. II. 1929.

*Ceylon*—With Gandhiji in Ceylon, by Mahadev Desai. S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, 1928.

*E. R.*—Ethical Religion, by M. K. Gandhi. S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, S. E.

*Ganesh*—M. K. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings. Ganesh & Co., 1918.

*G. H.*—A Guide to Health by Mahatma Gandhi. Translated from the Hindi by A. Rama Iyer, M. A. S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, S. E. 1930.

*H.*—*Harijan*, 1934 onwards.

*I. H. R.*—Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, Second Edition. G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras.

*I. V.*—Gandhiji in Indian Villages, by Mahadev Desai. S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, 1927.

*Natesan*—Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi. Fourth Edition. G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras. One of the best single-volume collections of Gandhiji's writings.

*N. V.*—The Nation's Voice, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, 1932.

*S. A.*—Satyagraha in South Africa by M. K. Gandhi. S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, 1928.

*S. R.*—Self-Restraint *versus* Self-Indulgence by M. K. Gandhi. Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, 1930.

*Y. I.*—*Young India*, 1919—1932.

*Y. M.*—From Yeravda Mandir by M. K. Gandhi. Jivanji Rahyabhai Desai, Navajivan Karyalaya, Gandhi Road, Ahmedabad.

*Young India.*—From 1919-22, 1924-26 and 1927-29 are available in bound volumes published by S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras.

---





## The Case for an Intellectual Movement to support Gandhism

A small thing which is outwardly insignificant may become charged with great significance where the central principles of life are involved. Then the small becomes great and the big and showy things of life dwindle into mere nothingness.

Such an incident happened some time ago in my life. For the past few years, I have been trying to follow the trend of the Gandhi movement carefully in Bengal. I have witnessed its living principles degenerate into a formal deadness of habit. The same fate which overtook Christianity and Buddhism in their latter days, has seemed to me to endanger the Gandhi movement also during certain phases of its history. I have tried to find out the cause, and it has appeared each time that the danger invariably comes when we allow our intellect to rest and our mind to sleep. As soon as we become satisfied with the belief that our path alone is the right one, as soon as pride invades our heart, our practices invariably tend to become dead like the dead petals of a rose which has lost all its fragrance. Intellect is the perfume which enlivens our actions, without it all becomes trash.

From Gandhiji's writings it has appeared to me that he too is aware of the same pitfall; and he has therefore warned those who profess to follow him in no uncertain terms.

"Truth and non-violence are not for the dense. Pursuit of them is bound to result in an all round growth of the body, mind and heart. If this does not follow, either truth and non-violence are untrue, and since the former is impossible the latter will be the only conclusion" ( *H.*, 8.5.37 ).

"Man alone can worship God with knowledge and understanding. Where devotion is void of understanding, there can be

no true salvation, and without salvation there can be no true happiness" ( *G. H.*, p. 129 ).

Gandhi may be looked upon as an apostle of love, as a great man of action, but there is enough reason for us to believe that he sets greater store upon knowledge, upon the living realization of unity, than upon action or love as the ultimate value of life. Action and love are valuable in so far as they are the means to that realization which finally and fully comes in the intellect, but which also covers our heart and our lives in the end.

This being my personal belief, I have tried to move men of importance, in the matter of an intellectual movement to support and energize the political and social movement set on foot by Gandhi. The response has generally been unsatisfactory. It was even so when once I met an important member of the Congress in Bengal who strictly tried to follow in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi. I had seen this gentleman twice before with proposals for initiating an intellectual movement of the required kind, but had not received any favourable response from him. His answer had always been that through the intellect we can appeal to a class of people who do not matter very much in the struggle for independence. Those who matter, *i.e.* the uneducated villagers, need no intellectual support to keep them on their mettle. I had agreed with him in so far as the masses were concerned ; but then there was the equally important band of educated political workers, who, on their part, needed this intellectual food so that they might conduct the Gandhi movement according to the ideals of its author.

On the third occasion when I met him, there was the usual refusal and I felt like the champion of a lost cause ; naturally I became bitter. But I entertained the hope that perhaps the gentleman might step out of his own shoes for a while, and try to appreciate my view-point to some extent, and concede some measure of importance to the intellect in the political movement which we were witnessing before our eyes. But the thing was not to be ; and in a fit of bad temper, I prayed for the day when

he would be intelligent enough to appreciate the significance of intellect in life.

This was the last straw. He became grave, but fortunately did not show any sign of anger just then. On the following day, I went back to him with a booklet regarding Gandhism, when the incident referred to in the beginning, took place. The gentleman burst into an angry denunciation against intellectuals of the class to which I belonged, *i.e.* those who did not lead the life of Gandhi, but merely tried to approach him through the intellect. At first I was taken by surprise ; but later on, I thought, it was good that the gentleman had let off steam in the manner that he did, rather than harbour a secret ill feeling against me. This was an incident to be forgotten. But what struck me afterwards was, that in course of his denunciation, our friend had divided the world into two camps ; one consisting of those who followed the right path in their life's practice, and another who did not do so. The former were the elect, while the latter were inferior, and thus probably objects worthy to be pitied, or, perhaps merely to be tolerated.

But can this be ever said of Gandhi himself ? Certainly not. As years roll by, he becomes more and more tolerant, more appreciative of his opponents' view-point than he ever was before. And it is in this large-heartedness, this ever expanding charity that the proof of his spiritual progress and of his greatness lies. Love expands in his heart, until it embraces all those who differ from him and even oppose him.

The next scene is laid in a small village in a far away corner of Eastern Bengal. A school for training political workers is held periodically in an Ashram by one of the most devoted disciples of Gandhiji in Bengal. In that school, sometime back, this worker was lecturing to an audience of political workers gathered for a three-monthly course of training. He was speaking on God and the need of prayer in our spiritual life. A friend of mine, who happened to be present, put in by way of parenthesis when he was next asked to speak, that prayer did not mean that one should necessarily have a belief in the existence of a personal

divinity. Buddha began his day with a few silent minutes ; and in the same manner, a righteous man could begin his day with a brief period of contemplation. It did not matter whether he believed in God or did not, in the usual sense. For such a man, my friend implied, Right and Justice had attained the same status as that of God in a religious man's life. Both were prepared to sacrifice their most valued treasures for what they held dearest in life. Few could find fault with a statement of that kind. But the members of the Ashram were, more or less, shocked by the speech ; although the students themselves are reported to have been delighted. It was, according to the teachers, a step which might lead the students away from the true Gandhian path. But we know that Gandhi has himself said that for atheists like Bradlaugh, Truth held the same place as God for others.

Here then was the sign of the disease, namely the fear that freedom of thought might endanger the moral integrity of the soldier of Satyagraha.

The third scene is laid in the hectic days of 1930 when the Civil Disobedience Movement was at its height. The Satyagrahis were on the move in all districts and the timid villagers often refused to listen to them and sometimes even to give them food and shelter within the confines of the village. The repression of the Government was thus having its effect upon the common folk. The leaders of the Movement were in a fix ; and one of them advised the Satyagrahis not to give up their propaganda tours, but to go without food when the villagers did not give them any. Following this advice, an important worker of North Bengal, sent the Satyagrahis under his care with the above instruction. And what he did more, was to enter into a voluntary fast at the headquarters where he himself was posted. At the latter place, there was no justification for fasting ; but the worker thus argued with himself, "If I send away one volunteer with the instruction to fast, I must, first of all, do so myself and feel what it is like." We knew that he himself had no faith in fasting as a means to the conversion of the villagers.

Anyway, the point is, that the Satyagrahis were up against a dead wall in their march ; and instead of being able to preserve Satyagraha and love in a living condition, they were driven to the expediency of following routine without faith and perhaps also with little hope of success.

These three incidents therefore drive us to the inevitable conclusion that we should not neglect the intellect even when we profess to follow the heart as a guide to action. Pride may invade our path, and so may dullness of thought and of action. It is intellect alone which can rescue us from such a situation. Intellect forms as much a part of life as the heart and actions do. We cannot neglect one without endangering the integrity of the others. In this connection, there come back to me the wise words of the *Yogavasistha Ramayana* :

"This human life is for the attainment of knowledge. And if a man always analyses the root cause of everything (*vichara*), his sorrows will become less and less. Remember this and with determination always analyse the root of everything. Never neglect the intellectual approach (*vichara*), never minimize its value." (*Mumukshu-vyavahara-prakarana*, 12/12).

"This constant aid in the shape of *vichara* is an unequalled remedy for the sorrows of life." (*Ibid.* 14/2).

"Rama ! it is better to be a worm inhabiting a dung-heap, or a serpent confined to the mountain cave, than to lose one's analytical insight in life. Its loss is the root of all unhappiness. The sages have deprecated its loss, and you should never lose your *vichara* in life." (*Ibid.* 14/46-7)

"For one who is fallen into the dark abyss of ignorance, there is no means of rescue except *vichara*, the analytical intellectual approach." (*Ibid.* 14/48).

---

# The Philosophy and Technique of Satyagraha

*I am essentially a non-violent man, and I believe in war bereft  
of every trace of violence (Harijan, 14. 5. 38).*

## The Philosophy

### *Satyagraha, a form of war*

William James was not only a great psychologist but was also a great man. He loved mankind and hated war. But he also knew that war had certain merits: it developed the sense of responsibility and discipline, comradeship and courage as hardly anything else could. But he recognized that the advantages of war were more than offset by the suffering and degradation which came inevitably in its train. So he tried to find some "moral equivalent of war" which would influence human character beneficially in the same way as war, but for which we would not have to pay as dearly as in the case of a bloody conflict. The phrase quoted above was probably of William James's coinage, and in an essay written many years ago, he suggested that instead of making war itself tabu, we should rather change its direction. Instead of allowing men to waste their lives in fighting against one another, we should train them to battle with the forces of nature so that human life may be made richer and happier in the end.

William James died four years before the great European War, in which America later on joined to take her due share. It was proof that the lesson of the great psychologist had fallen upon stony ground even in his own country. It would certainly have been good if all human beings had taken his lesson to heart, but unfortunately they did not do so. And one of the principal reasons for the failure was that the proposed equivalent did not, in any way, help to solve the quarrels and antagonisms of mankind where they actually existed. If all men had already possessed the sense of human brotherhood, if they had realized from the

start that it was in the welfare of the whole that the welfare of each part also lay, then they might have turned their energy to a better purpose than wasting it in war. But when that sense itself was lacking, when groups of men rather hoped to hold for themselves all the good things of the earth with the aid of the sword, when selfishness was burning fiercely within, the highly moral lesson of William James sounded more like a utopian's dream than any ideal capable of practical realization.

It is just here that the method of non-violent non-cooperation steps in as a really effective substitute for war. It does not propose to do away with war, it does not beguile men away from the reality of worldly conflicts, but it raises the quality of those very conflicts by bringing into operation a spirit of love and a sense of human brotherhood. Satyagraha is not a substitute for war; it is war itself shorn of many of its ugly features and guided by a purpose far nobler than what we generally associate with destruction. It is itself an intensely heroic and chivalrous form of war.

### *Love and Unity*

The first article of faith with the Satyagrahi is the need of recognizing and of loving all mankind as one. The Satyagrahi also holds that love is never consistent with exploitation in any shape or form. Exclusive possession can never go together with love. If we have love in us, we can only possess when everyone else can also possess the same thing if he needs it. In accordance with this fundamental belief, the Satyagrahi holds that whenever there is a conflict of interests in human society, there must be something wrong somewhere. And if we can look into the situation with patience and wisdom enough, a way can surely be found to restore the sense of human unity, and, at the same time, to serve the best interests of humanity taken as a whole. It will be a way illumined by love, and one in which there will be no room for exploitation of any human being.



*Joint action*

The Satyagrahi also believes that such a solution can be best arrived at if he himself and his adversary can somehow put their heads together. But the adversary can hardly be made to realize the injustice of his position by mere talking and argumentation. If we shoot him dead or cow him down by violence, it does not help the cause very much. Fear demoralizes and raises fresh barriers to better understanding in the hearts of men in authority today. Pride and self-defence stiffen their back, and make them less amenable to reason, justice and fair play. The Satyagrahi has therefore to devise some means of dealing with them effectively, and it is through self-suffering that he proposes to do so.

*Appeal to the head through the heart*

Let us explain what the Satyagrahi exactly understands by self-suffering. It has already been said that the first law of the Satyagrahi is the law of love. The second law, which follows from love, is that the way to the adversary's head is not through the head but through the heart. He believes that it is only through suffering, voluntarily and cheerfully endured, that the way can be opened to better understanding and a due recognition on the part of the adversary, of the injustice of his own position.

Gandhi once wrote: "I have come to this fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done, you must not merely satisfy reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head, but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding in man" (Y. I., 5. 11. 31).

The Satyagrahi knows that all systems of exploitation thrive in the world because both the exploiter and the exploited cooperate in their maintenance. The exploited do so through fear, but they cooperate with the exploiters all the same. It is just here that the Satyagrahi sees his opportunity of voluntary

suffering. He tries to wreck the system of exploitation by refusing to cooperate with it, and thus draws upon his devoted head all the repression his adversary is capable of administering. If he stands unmoved through the shower of repression, his sufferings, heroically endured, are likely to touch the heart of the oppressor and thus pave the way for mutual discussion and a joint effort to build up a social system without the injustices of the present. It may also happen that the Satyagrahi fails to touch the heart of the exploiter with all his suffering. But even then his endeavours need not go in vain. For, continued non-cooperation will bring about the downfall of any system, whether the Satyagrahi eventually succeeds in gaining the goodwill and cooperation of the exploiter or not. No system can endure with non-cooperation all the while cutting away the ground from under it.

Thus, this is the most important distinction between Satyagraha and war. In war, the conquered is subjected to the will of the conqueror through punishment; in Satyagraha it is the ideal to create an atmosphere in which both cooperate to replace an unjust social and economic system by one based upon justice. The latter condition is brought about, not by the infliction of punishment upon the exploiter, but by the persuasion of non-violent non-cooperation. In the joint action which follows, the Satyagrahi's conception of justice prevails. His will is thus not enforced, but becomes the joint will of the persecuted and the erstwhile persecutor. This is the way of love in contrast to the way of fear. "The end of non-violent 'war' is always an agreement, never dictation, much less humiliation of the opponent" (*H.*, 23. 3. 40).

### *The sense of unity*

The suffering which the Satyagrahi voluntarily endures must not be endured mechanically, nor even stoically. All through the struggle of non-cooperation, it must be illumined by a sense of human love. If that love does not remain steady but grows dim, then there is surely something wrong with the Satyagrahi

on his intellectual side. Only when love grows, and the conviction also grows, that all mankind is after all one, can one be sure that one is on the right path. For the faith in the essential unity of man is not merely the starting point of Satyagraha, but its complete intellectual and emotional realization is also the ultimate end of the process. It is only when that realization is complete, can the Satyagrahi claim that he has done his utmost for the increase of human happiness. Resistance shorn of love merely degrades, and love shorn of understanding never succeeds in elevating mankind.

### *Non-violence, superior to violence*

One may, however, object that Gandhi's path of labour and of resistance for bringing about the social revolution is an endless one ; it requires superhuman patience for its due fulfilment. Why should we waste our energy in trying to redeem those who exploit mankind, those who have very little of the better stuff of humanity left in them ? May we not use the minimum of violence, just enough to capture the State and maintain it, and then build up a better humanity through better education ? Once we have the State under our control, we can train up men in unselfishness and also place legal and constitutional barriers upon the exercise of selfishness.

Gandhi agrees partly with his communist critics when they argue in this manner. He would say, Yes, we have to capture the State, and that is why we are fighting for the attainment of Swaraj in India ; even though, I believe, as an anarchist that all organizations based on the coercive method should disappear from the face of the earth. But that apart, the process by which we can wrest authority from those in power need not be one of violence. Non-violence is enough for our purpose. And, in that process of non-violent non-cooperation, we start to educate ourselves, as well as our opponents, in unselfishness from the very beginning. We do not have to wait until the battle is won on our behalf. Satyagraha blesses him who uses it, as

well as him against whom it is used. It is a process of self-purification for the Satyagrahi, while it also stimulates the latent human qualities within his opponent's breast. The non-co-operating warrior thus gains one march over his friend, the communist, who uses violence, by being able to employ the educative process from the very beginning of his fight for power.

But this is not the only argument in favour of love or non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi also believes that one who uses the sword also perishes by the sword. If we have to depend, not upon our ability of self-sacrifice, but upon external violence for the vindication of our cause, then one who can wield greater violence may claim that justice lies on his side. Success through violence blinds us to our own faults; and this spirit of self-righteousness, devoid of the spirit of self-examination, is the greatest condemnation that Gandhi can think of against the school of violence. Success through violence is no proof of Truth and ultimately leads to untruth. So Gandhi holds it as a fundamental proposition, that it is only by non-violence that we should combat violence, and it is only by love that we can overcome hatred. It is only a full sense of human unity which can combat and ultimately overwhelm the selfish and sectional spirit of mankind.

And for this purpose, he has devised an organized method of mass action, which we shall now proceed to describe in some detail.

## The Method

### *Bread labour and voluntary effort*

Satyagraha should begin by an immediate change in the daily life of the Satyagrahi. He must examine every detail of his life and his relation to other human beings, and see if he is living upon the labour of other people. If he finds that he belongs to the band of exploiters, he must immediately set about correcting that state of affairs. For love and unity demand that no man should live upon the involuntary toils of another.

It is Gandhi's idea that unless *all* men produce their

daily bread by manual labour, there will be inequality on earth and exploitation in some form or another. Every man should preferably produce corn from the soil by dint of his own labour. If he cannot, then he must turn to some occupation like carpentry, blacksmithery or spinning and weaving, by means of which he can produce the equivalent of what he consumes for his own maintenance. No amount of intellectual labour can be substitute for even an ounce of manual labour; and thus, in the ideal state, no one, other than an old or sick person or a child, should be absolved from the duty and obligation of bread labour. Every man is worthy only of his hire; and that hire consists of his daily bread and of nothing more.

This is the reason why, in Gandhi's scheme, non-violent non-cooperation or Satyagraha and the philosophy of the spinning wheel go side by side. They are like two faces of the same coin. The spinning wheel is, for him, the symbol of voluntary bread labour.

When the Satyagrahi thus tries to reorganize his own life in accordance with the principle of non-violence, he soon finds himself pitted against the existing social and economic order. He also discovers that the voluntary effort of people like him does not carry the world very far on the road to equality and happiness; and so, he has to join in a mass-attack against existing organizations.

The following instructions show how Gandhi has elaborated a method of personal resistance into one of mass-action on a large scale.

### *Progressive non-cooperation and caution*

It has already been said that the road of the Satyagrahi lies through suffering voluntarily endured. But the most important thing about it is that the suffering should come in a progressive manner, just as our non-cooperation should also be progressive in character. "The secret of non-violence and non-co-operation lies in our realising that it is through suffering that we are to attain our goal. What is the renunciation of titles,

councils, law-courts and schools but a measure (very slight indeed) of suffering? That preliminary renunciation is a prelude to the larger suffering, the hardships of gaol life and even the final consummation on the gallows, if need be. The more we suffer, the more of us suffer, the nearer we are to our cherished goal"(Y.I., 29.9.21). A Congress worker once asked Gandhiji how long he was to continue on starvation allowance. Gandhi promptly replied: "Till death even as a soldier fights till he is victorious or, which is the same thing, drops down dead" (Y.I., 24.7.24). For the Satyagrahi personally, there is no time limit nor is there any limit to his capacity of suffering (Y.I., 19.2.25).

But Gandhi never prescribes the same dose for the masses as he does for the professional Satyagrahi. As a practical leader of men, he recognizes that "suffering has its well-defined limits. Suffering can be both wise and unwise, and, when the limit is reached, to prolong it would be not unwise, but the height of folly"(Y.I., 12.3.31). He never engages the masses in an enterprise which is likely to bring about defeat and demoralization. He prescribes for them a step which is just beyond their capacity: And in order to attain that immediate objective, the masses have to exercise their limbs, not to the breaking point, but sufficiently to create in them a sense of self-confidence and leave them stronger to carry on their further struggle. In aiming beyond their capacity, they are likely to lose all (H., 10.6.39).

Whenever there is a chance of demoralization, Gandhi orders a retreat; and he has never been ashamed of doing so as often as the situation has demanded. When, in Rajkot, he discovered that the masses were not prepared to pay the price of freedom, although a certain measure of awakening had taken place among them, he advised them to lower the pitch of their demand and even to suspend civil disobedience. He has said: "I had the sense and humility to retrace my steps whenever I discovered blunders. Hence the nation has gone forward step by step"(H., 10.6.39). Even as early as 1920, he used to say that

he was not going to take a single step in non-cooperation unless he was satisfied that the country was ready for it (*Y.I.*, 18.8.20).

But behind the moderation of a great leader, there is always the intention to lead the whole nation until it is ready to die like one man, if necessary, for the benefit of humanity. "Just as the cult of patriotism teaches us that the individual has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province and the province for the country, even so a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love therefore of nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my country may die so that the human races may live" (*I.V.*, p. 170). Only, the path to that supreme sacrifice lies through successive stages.

Many have complained that Gandhi is no revolutionary but a reformist. Perhaps they are wrong. For a reformist marches from one advantage to another, from one morsel of food gained anyhow from the enemy power to a second one. He relies upon an appeal to the sense of justice of the opponent. But when that fails, he does not really know what to do ; for conflict is eschewed from his path altogether.

But Gandhi is a born fighter ; and he leads men, not from one small gain to another, but from one danger to a still greater one, from one sacrifice to yet another which calls forth greater courage, greater forbearance and a greater faith in the brotherhood of man. There is, of course, a gain ; but the gain is more often subjective than objective in quality. Gandhi is prepared to rest on his oars, but he is never prepared to lay them down until he is satisfied that the nation now rests with death as its pillow (*I.H.R.*, p. 101). For that is the final test of whether the nation has become worthy of enjoying the good things of life or not. What more can a revolutionary demand, for he also leads men through the portals of death to final victory ? Gandhi once said in this connection : "Some have called me the greatest revolutionary of my time. It may be false but I believe myself to be a revolutionary, a non-violent revolutionary. My means are non-cooperation" (*Y.I.*, 26.11.31).

"I have concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use"(Correspondence with Pandit Jawaharlal published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 17.9.33).

This then is the second law of the practice of Satyagraha. Non-cooperation must start with little things calculated to force the masses to brave dangers of a mild type and to develop in them a certain measure of courage, discipline and self-sacrifice. But the Satyagrahi must so advance that ultimately the masses face the fear of death without losing courage and without bitterness in their hearts. It is then only that the good things for which they are fighting will come within their grasp.

\* It is because progressive non-cooperation frees the mind, step by step, from laziness, fear and hatred and all forms of selfishness, that Gandhi has called Satyagraha a process of self-purification. When men are thus purified, no power on earth can exploit them or build up an unjust economic or social system either through their voluntary or involuntary cooperation.

The path of voluntary suffering for the sake of a principle has been practised by men of idealisin ever since the beginning of human history. Gandhi's special contribution lies in the fact that he has converted a technique of individual resistance into one of mass-action. He once wrote: "Self-government depends entirely upon our own internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds. Indeed, self-government which does not require that continuous striving to attain it and to sustain it is not worth the name. I have therefore endeavoured to show both in word and deed, that political self-government—that is self-government for a large number of men and women,—is no better than individual self-government, and therefore it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule" (*Ceylon*, p. 93).

### *Keep the demands low*

Another important feature of the Satyagrahi's code is that



in putting forward any legitimate demand, he always tries to make it the irreducible minimum (Y.I., 2.4.25). The Satyagrahi personally must be entirely satisfied about the justice of his claims ; but even after that, he must keep it as small as possible. Perhaps, if the Satyagrahi held forth a larger demand, his adversary might be frightened into yielding smaller concessions. But this is not his way, he refuses to stampede his opponents into surrender. "His action never creates panic in the breast of his 'enemy'"(H., 20.5.39). "It should never produce enduring violent reaction upon the opponent"(H., 24.6.39). He expects even them to recognize the justice of his claims, and thus incidentally enlists world-opinion in his own favour.

There is also an additional advantage. When the demands are high, even when they are just, partial concessions by the adversary are likely to create divisions within his own rank. But if the demands are low, and consistent with justice, the chances of rift in the rank of Satyagrahis are very much reduced. In connection with the history of Satyagraha in South Africa, Gandhi wrote : "In a pure fight, the fighters would never go beyond the objective when the fight began, even if they received an accession to their strength in course of the fighting and, on the other hand, they could not give up their objective, if they found their strength dwindling away"(S.A., p. 412).

It must be pointed out here, that during the retreat at Rajkot, when he discovered that the masses were not ready to pay adequate price for freedom, he said : "Our aim must remain what it is, but we must be prepared to negotiate for less than the whole so long as it is unmistakably of the same kind and has in it inherent possibility of expansion"(H., 10. 6. 39). This was, however, under special circumstances, for the demands had originally been pitched too high, without reference to the existing fighting capacity of the masses within the State.

### *No hurry*

In connection with Satyagraha, Gandhiji always advises us to avoid hurry, i. e. not to lose patience in any way. In 1922,

when everyone anxiously expected him to launch the campaign of non-payment of taxes, he wrote : "We must not resort to non-payment because of the possibility of a ready response. This readiness is a fatal temptation. Such non-payment will not be civil or non-violent, but it will be criminal and fraught with the greatest possibility of violence. Not until the peasantry is trained to understand the reason and the virtue of civil non-payment and is prepared to look with calm resignation upon the confiscation of their holdings and the forced sale of their cattle and other belongings, may they be advised to withhold payment of taxes"(Y. I., 26. 1. 22). "There need be no mistake about our goal. The masses are our sheet-anchor. We shall continue patiently to educate them politically till they are ready for safe action. As soon as we feel reasonably confident of non-violence continuing among them in spite of provoking executions, we shall certainly call upon the sepoy to lay down his arms and the peasantry to suspend payment of taxes"(Y. I., 9. 3. 21).

*Seek avenues of cooperation with the adversary  
on honourable terms*

The Satyagrahi should always be prepared to come to terms with his adversary. "The first and the last work of a Satyagrahi is ever to seek an opportunity for an honourable approach" (H., 10.6.39). "He does not let slip a single opportunity for settlement, and he does not mind if any one therefore looks upon him as timid. The man who has faith in him and the strength which follows from faith, does not care if he is looked down upon by others. He relies solely upon his internal strength. He is therefore courteous to all, and thus cultivates and enlists world opinion in favour of his own cause" (S. A., p. 442). "A Satyagrahi bids good-bye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of trusting his opponent. Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the Satyagrahi is ready to trust him the twenty-first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed" (S. A., p. 246).

Behind his non-cooperation there is always the desire to cooperate on the slightest pretext even with the worst of enemies. (Y. I., 4.6.25). But this does not mean that he ever contemplates any surrender in matters of fundamental importance. Gandhi laid down as a general principle, the rule that : "Having fixed one's minimum, from which one may not recede, one may stoop to conquer the whole world" (Y. I., 2.4.28).

Commenting on the British Government's attitude towards the claim of India's independence, Gandhi has lately written : "All compromise is give and take, but there can be no give and take on fundamentals. Any compromise on fundamentals is a surrender. For it is all give and no take. The time for compromise can only come when both are of one mind on fundamentals, *i.e.*, when the British Government have made up their mind that not they but Indians will determine the constitution under which the latter will be governed" (H., 30.3.40).

### *Who shall fight ?*

The next rule in a Satyagraha campaign is that the people who are suffering under an unjust burden should themselves carry on the fight ; they should not count upon outside aid for that purpose. "It is the essence of Satyagraha that those who are suffering should alone offer it. Cases can be conceived when what may be termed sympathetic Satyagraha may be legitimately applied. The idea underlying Satyagraha is to convert the wrong-doer, to awaken the sense of justice in him, to show him also that without the co-operation, direct or indirect, of the wronged the wrongdoer cannot do the wrong intended by him. If the people in either case are not ready to suffer for their causes, no outside help in the shape of Satyagraha can possibly bring true deliverance" (H., 10. 12. 38).

In connection with Rajkot, Gandhi wrote : "I think the initial mistake was made when all Kathiawadis were permitted to join Rajkot Satyagraha. That step introduced an element of weakness in the fight. Thereby we put our reliance on numbers,

whereas a Satyagrahi relies solely upon God who is the help of the helpless. A Satyagrahi always says to himself, 'He in whose name Satyagraha was launched, will also see it through.' If the people of Rajkot had thought in these terms, there would have been no temptation to organise big processions or mass demonstrations and probably there would have been no atrocities such as Rajkot has had to experience. A genuine Satyagrahi proceeds by setting the opponent at his ease. His action never creates panic in the breast of the 'enemy'. Supposing as a result of rigid enforcement of the rules of Satyagrahis Rajkot Satyagraha had been confined to a few hundred or even a few score true Satyagrahis and they had carried on their Satyagraha in the right spirit till their last breath, theirs would have served as a heroic example" (*H.*, 20. 5. 39).

This does not, however, mean that people have, first of all, to be perfect men and then be in a position to practise the active resistance of Satyagraha. Satyagraha is itself an educative process, and soldiers are expected to be better and better men as they progress in the art. In the *Harijan* of 21.7.40, Gandhi has written: "Let no one understand that a non-violent army is open only to those who strictly enforce in their lives all the implications of non-violence. It is open to all those who accept the implications and make an ever-increasing endeavour to observe them. There never will be an army of perfectly non-violent people. It will be formed of those who will honestly endeavour to observe non-violence."

### *Constructive work and Satyagraha*

We have already stated that Satyagraha is a moral substitute for war. That also implies that, like war, Satyagraha cannot be maintained at a high pitch for an indefinite length of time. It has to be alternated with peace-time activities calculated to develop those particular qualities which are useful in periods of intensive non-cooperation. For this, according to Gandhi, there can hardly be anything better than constructive work, intelligently carried out, along lines often suggested by him after the campaigns

of 1921 and 1932. It is better than the method of training the masses through small battles on local economic issues ; for, according to Gandhi, that does not help to build up the unity and non-violence necessary for Swaraj.

The question was put to him whether we could not start small battles on local and specific issues against capitalism in the villages and use them as a means of strengthening the people or bringing into being a sense of cooperation among them, in preference to the Khadi method. To this he replied : "We are fighting for Swaraj in the non-violent way. If many workers in different parts of India engage in local battles of the sort you describe, then in times of necessity, the people all over India will not be able to make a common cause in a fight for Swaraj. Before a civil disobedience can be practised on a vast scale, people must learn the art of civil or voluntary obedience. Our obedience to the government is through fear ; and the reaction against it is either violence itself or that species of it, which is cowardice. But through Khadi we teach people the art of civil obedience to an institution which they have built up for themselves. Only when they have learnt that art, can they successfully disobey something which they want to destroy in the non-violent way. That is why I should advise all workers not to fritter their fighting strength in many-sided battles, but to concentrate on peaceful Khadi-work in order to educate the masses into a condition necessary for a successful practice of non-violent no-cooperation. With their own exploitation, boycott of foreign cloth through picketting may easily be violent ; through the use of Khadi it is most natural and absolutely non-violent" (*Modern Review*, October 1935, p. 412).

In Gandhi's opinion, constructive work serves to consolidate the masses, generate trust between them and their leaders, train them into habits of self-reliance, patience and into the ability to run big institutions by themselves. So, he once compared the effect of these works with what drilling etc. does for an army designed for war in the ordinary sense. A short while before the Salt Movement of 1930, he wrote : "I know that

many have refused to see any connection between the constructive programme and civil disobedience. Constructive programme is not essential for local civil disobedience for specific relief as in the case of Bardoli. Tangible common grievance restricted to a particular locality is enough. But for such an indefinable thing as Swaraj people must have previous training in doing things of all-India interest. Such work must throw together the people and their leaders whom they would trust implicitly. Trust begotten in the pursuit of continuous constructive work becomes a tremendous asset at the critical moment. Constructive work therefore is for a non-violent army what drilling etc. is for an army designed for bloody warfare. Individual civil disobedience among an unprepared people and by leaders not known to or trusted by them is of no avail, and mass civil disobedience is an impossibility. The more therefore the progress of the constructive programme, the greater is the chance for civil disobedience" (Y. I., 9. 1. 30).

Recently, he has written : "There is no non-violent disobedience without sustained constructive effort. A living continuous mass contact is impossible without some constructive programme requiring almost daily contact of the workers with the masses ( H., 24. 3. 40 ).

### *Self-help among labourers*

But this is not Gandhi's only argument in favour of constructive endeavours. With regard to the organization of mill-hands into labour unions, he suggested that these unions should teach the labourers some form of supplementary industry, with the help of which they would be able to tide over difficult periods during prolonged strikes. The occupations would also have a heartening influence upon the labourers themselves ; for they would feel that they are not absolutely helpless and dependent upon the mercy of their employers.

Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 3. 7. 37 : "The Ahmedabad Labour Union has of late started a great experiment. Mill-hands are being taught to select occupations which they can

practise in their leisure hours at home and which would give them substantial relief in times of unemployment. These are ginning, cleaning, carding and spinning of cotton, weaving, tailoring, soap and paper making, type-setting etc.

"The essence of the experiment consists in training its members to a supplementary occupation in addition to their principal occupation in the mills so that in the event of a lock-out, strike or loss of employment otherwise, they would always have something to fall back upon instead of being faced with the prospect of starvation. A mill-hand's life is full of vicissitudes. Thrift and economy no doubt provide a sort of remedy and it would be criminal to neglect them. But the savings thus made cannot carry one far, seeing that the vast bulk of our mill labourers are always struggling on the margin of bare subsistence. Moreover it would never do for a working man during strike or unemployment to rest idly at home. There is nothing more injurious to his morale and self-respect than enforced idleness. The working class will never feel secure or develop a sense of self-assurance and strength unless its members are armed with an unfailing subsidiary means of subsistence to serve as second string to their bow in a crisis.

"It is the greatest of superstitions for the working man to believe that he is helpless before the employers. The effort of the Labour Union in Ahmedabad is to dispel this superstition in a concrete manner. Its experiment, therefore, ought to be welcomed by all concerned. Success will depend on inflexible determination on the part of the Labour Union to follow up the good beginning that has been made, with unflagging perseverance. It must have the right sort of instructors who can arouse among the workers an intelligent interest in their work. A handicraft plied merely mechanically can be as cramping to the mind and soul as any other pursuit taken up mechanically. An unintelligent effort is like a corpse from which the spirit has departed".

### *Responsibility of the leaders*

It has already been pointed out that it is essential to

generate trust between the masses and their leaders for successful non-cooperation. This is doubly necessary if we are to maintain successfully the non-violent character of the struggle. Non-violence is something which must start with the mind, and the will must be so developed that the habits and instinct of violence are kept in check. This however requires a degree of mental development which is not generally present among the masses. But if the leaders are intelligently non-violent, and if the masses trust them implicitly, then non-cooperation can be kept within the limits of non-violence. For this it is necessary that those who lead should themselves have an intelligent faith in non-violence; and should, consequently, try to live up to all its implications in life.

Q. How do you think that the masses can practise non-violence, when we know that they are all prone to anger, hate, ill-will? They are known to fight for most trivial things.

A. They are, and yet I think they can practise non-violence for the common good. Do you think the thousands of women that collected contrabrand salt had ill-will against any one? They knew that the Congress or Gandhi had asked them to do certain things, and they did those things in faith and hope. To my mind the most perfect demonstration of non-violence was in Champaran. Did the thousands of ryots who rose up in revolt against the agrarian evils harbour the least ill will against the Government or the planters? Their belief in non-violence was unintelligent, even as the belief in the earth being round with many is unintelligent. But their belief in their leaders was genuine, and that was enough. With those who lead it is another matter. Their belief has got to be intelligent, and they have to live up to all the implications of the belief" (H., 4. 11. 39).

### *Maintain your own initiative*

The Satyagrahi should never allow the initiative to pass from his hands into those of his adversary. "And I always gives battle in his own time on the go."



choice. He always retains the initiative in these respects and never allows it to pass into the hands of the enemy.

"In a Satyagraha campaign the mode of fight and the choice of tactics, e.g., whether to advance or retreat, offer civil resistance or organize non-violent strength through constructive work and purely humanitarian service are determined according to the exigencies of the situation. A Satyagrahi must carry out whatever plan is laid out for him with a cool determination giving way to neither excitement nor depression" (*H.*, 27. 5. 39)

"Discipline has a place in non-violent strategy, but much more is required. In a satyagraha army everybody is a soldier and a servant. But at a pinch every Satyagrahi Soldier, has also to be his own general and leader. Mere discipline cannot make for leadership. The latter calls for faith and vision" (*H.*, 28.7.40).

### *Publicity*

In the *History of Satyagraha in South Africa*, Gandhi wrote something with regard to the connection between newspapers and Satyagraha to which we must pay careful attention. He said: "I believe that a struggle which chiefly relies upon internal strength cannot be wholly carried on without a newspaper, and it is also my experience that we could not perhaps have educated the local Indian community, nor kept Indians all over the world in touch with the course of events in South Africa in any other way, with the same ease and success as through *Indian Opinion*, which therefore was certainly a most useful and potent weapon in our struggle.

"As the community was transformed in course of and as a result of the struggle, so was *Indian Opinion*" (p. 221).

### *Final instruction*

In spite of having given so much detailed instruction with regard to Satyagraha at different times, Gandhi always advises us not to precipitate a campaign where it can be avoided. "It is an essential part of non-violence to go along the line of least resistance" (*H.*, 5.12.36).

His final instruction to all Satyagrahis is as follows : "Since Satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a Satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. He will therefore constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha. But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out upon Satyagraha he has burnt his boats and there is no receding" (Y. I., 20.10.27).

"It will be contrary to every canon of Satyagraha to launch upon the extreme step till every other is exhausted. Such haste will itself constitute violence" (H., 24.6.39).

### Summary

A. In war, we compel obedience to our will by punishing the adversary. In Satyagraha, it is the ideal to create an atmosphere of joint action, not by punishing the adversary, but by courageous non-violent resistance.

War compels through punishment, Satyagraha compels through the resistance of love. In it punishment is invited by the Satyagrahi upon himself. In the course of resistance, the Satyagrahi tries to keep his mind full of love for his adversary. If he cannot, he, at least, tries to keep it free from hatred.

This is calculated to touch the heart of the adversary, open the way to his head, with a view to enlisting his cooperation in building up a new social and economic system without injustice and without exploitation.

B. An iniquitous system prevails in the world because the exploited directly or indirectly cooperate with the exploiters.

In withdrawing cooperation, i.e. in carrying out Satyagraha, the exploited gradually shed their laziness, selfishness and their divisive mentality, for iniquity thrives upon these foundations.

Satyagraha is thus a process of self-purification. Purified

men, in this sense of the term, cannot be subjected to exploitation, nor can they be party to the exploitation of others.

### *Instructions*

1. Satyagraha should be progressive in character. The masses should be led to face bigger and bigger dangers, the demand on self-purification being greater and greater, until they are able to face the fear of death calmly.

2. Keep the demands at the lowest level consistent with justice. In aiming beyond our capacity we are likely to lose all.

3. There should be no impatience, no hurry to cover inner weakness, no bluff.

4. Only those who suffer under a particular injustice should offer resistance against it. Do not count upon outside aid ; it fails in the last resort. In the final heat, one has to rely upon oneself.

5. Constructive work, intelligently carried out, develops those qualities necessary for Satyagraha. It generates trust between the masses and their leaders which is essential in every mass movement.

The trust and faith thus generated will help to keep the Satyagraha campaign at the proper non-violent level.

6. The practice of non-violence must be intelligent. In the case of the masses, it may not be so ; but in the case of their leaders, it must be so. They must try to live up to all its implications in life.

7. The Satyagrahi should always maintain the initiative on his own side, and not allow it to pass into the hands of his adversary.

8. Always seek avenues of cooperation with the adversary on honourable terms. The end of non-violent war is always an agreed solution in conformity with the claims of human unity and of justice.

9. In an agreement, never surrender the fundamentals ; but go on compromising, as far as possible, in non-essentials. Keep one angle of the square right, the rest will follow in due course.

10. When in doubt as to whether you have surrendered your fundamentals or not, apply the following test. If there is a feeling of expansion, you are on the right track ; if there is a feeling of contraction, then you are wrong.

11. Adequate publicity is an integral part of non-violent non-cooperation.

12. Satyagraha should be initiated only after all other approaches towards joint settlement have failed.

---

## Is Satyagraha Played Out ?

Mr. M. N. Roy has made out a strong case against Satyagraha as a means of gaining Swaraj in terms of the masses in India. His arguments may be briefly stated thus :

1. Gandhiji imposes certain conditions for the resumption of civil disobedience which are impossible to fulfil : Charka must be there in every Indian home ; non-violence has to be observed in thought, word and deed. So civil disobedience is practically permanently suspended, it is never going to come again.

2. Gandhism succeeded in 1919 because it filled a historical necessity. We were under repression for a long time, there was not self-confidence enough for an armed rebellion. So the passive resistance movement became popular ; "it did not risk an open attack, but there was the perspective of defeating the enemy by refusing to have anything to do with him." The Non-cooperation Movement was thus useful in giving expression to the mixed feelings of revolt and lack of self-confidence which existed at that time. But after 1921, the masses moved forward. The C. D. Movement came, but was repressed by Gandhi on the score of violence. The movement in the States today is also being suppressed on the same account. That means there is a conflict between the revolutionary urge of the masses and Gandhi's leadership with its particular methods. The masses are today not entirely self-confident, hence his remaining popularity. But things are so shaping themselves that their revolutionary fervour will grow, their confidence in action will also grow, and then they will be able to do without non-violent non-cooperation.

Gandhi's methods do not show growth ; they do not adjust themselves to the growing force of revolutionary mentality among the Indian masses. So it ought to be discarded.

Now, this is a strong case, if all of it could be taken as true. So far as the popularity of the movement is concerned, I believe Mr. M. N. Roy has said the right word. But has he stated the

correct thing with regard to Satyagraha ? We have a different view ; and because we hold that view, we stick to the method of Satyagraha in spite of reverses. Let us state the reasons briefly for whatever they may be worth.

Satyagraha requires a large amount of mass organization. Gandhi may set certain ideal conditions for its fulfilment ; but we find that in working for those conditions we organize the masses to a very great extent, even if we cannot reach the ideal itself. Khadi and Handloom work or the spread of primary education has given some political workers in Bengal a means of coming into intimate contact with the masses, a contact which would otherwise have been difficult to establish. From such positions of advantage, workers have often also taken the opportunity of carrying on non-violent action on economic issues, when an opportunity presented itself.

The non-violent method requires us to organize the masses in such a manner that, in the final stages of non-cooperation, they will be able to carry on work without outside aid. They will be trained to remain calm in the face of confiscation of their holdings or the forced sale of their cattle and other belongings. We hope to evoke that measure of courage and determination among them ; so we work along the non-violent way.

We also hold that it will be enough for our purpose if the masses are substantially organized, and remain non-violent in action. On the mental side, we try to explain to them that they must not hate the man who works the imperialist system. He is as much a victim of the system as we are ; so there is no reason for personal hatred. And if we can generate this absence of hatred, even if we cannot generate active love for the enemy, it will be enough for our purpose. Such are Gandhi's specific instructions.

We have faith that long before every man is non-violent in thought, word and deed, Swaraj will come in India. For the Congress worker, however, a higher standard is necessary than that for the masses. The ideal conditions may be necessary for *moksha*, but a lesser measure will do for India's Swaraj. We need not, however, on that account lower the ideal.

This faith is there in us. So when Gandhi suspends movements in Orissa or perhaps also in Travancore, and spreads us out in the villages for intensive constructive work, we only believe he wants us to establish more intimate mass contact as a prelude to direct action once more in the future. We do not believe that he suspends the Satyagraha movement there for all time to come. Mr. M. N. Roy says, this suspension is really permanent. We think otherwise; but that is a matter of opinion. And it is because we hold a different opinion that we obey Gandhi even when we may fret for immediate direct action.

But this does not necessarily spring from a blind faith in Gandhi. The Salt Movement came after Non-cooperation, the Civil Disobedience Movement came after the Salt Movement, and some other movement may crop up again. And in the course of these movements, we have noticed also how the masses have grown more and more fearless, more and more politically conscious. The above movements have given a concrete expression to the revolutionary urge of the masses; but we do not think they were suppressed at the critical moment. We believe Gandhi has often ordered a retreat for reasons other than the fear of mass violence. In his words: "Whenever I have suspended civil disobedience I have done so not by reason of any outbreak of violence, but upon the discovery of such violence as has been initiated or encouraged by Congressmen who should have known better" (Y. I., 29.10.25). For he holds: "No organisation can be run with success if its members, especially its officers refuse to carry out its policy and hold on to it in spite of opposition to it" (Y. I., 28.8.24). This is not an impossible condition which he imposes upon Congress workers. So we believe that Gandhi has often ordered a retreat before the actual routing took place, and this for organizational defect rather than for fear of mob-violence.

Mr. Roy may say that this reveals lack of self-confidence in us as regards the fighting capacity of the masses. But unfortunately we have had the experience of the masses retreating even though they promised to sacrifice their all in the face of

repression. Even violence is not always necessarily successful. Sometimes a hasty step has been known to generate cowardice in the end, which it has been extremely difficult to overcome. It is wrong to under-estimate the strength of the fighters, but it is also wrong to over-estimate it. It is because we consider Gandhi to be a wise general, that we are loyal to him.

But there is another more fundamental reason why we prefer the Gandhian method. And that loyalty to non-violent non-cooperation has come not from any lurking cowardice within us, but from a particular intellectual judgment. If we win by violence, and capture the State, then the party which wins may like to use violence against everyone who disagrees with it. By false propaganda among the masses also, it may keep them in darkness and maintain its own position of authority. In the Gandhian way, the authority of the State is not permitted to be centralized to the same extent as in the declared way of Socialism. Moreover, in the way of non-violent non-cooperation, the State can be won only when the masses have *become* self-conscious and self-reliant. And if they succeed in the non-violent way, then they will also succeed in keeping abuses of State power in check.

It is this *hope* ultimately which keeps us loyal to non-violence, even when the prospects of Satyagraha are admittedly dark on all sides. Mussolini claims that the masses are on his side. Hitler too does the same. Stalin surely does that, and in the name of mass-interest drives away all who differ from him. Krupskaya shared hardly any better fate. It is this blind condition of the masses in Europe, who cannot be accused of non-violence in any shape or form, which keeps us in doubt about the usefulness of violence. This is what ultimately leads us to hold on to non-violence intellectually as a better guarantee of democracy than violence, even when we are temperamentally otherwise. But we hope to rule our lives by intellect and not by emotions.

---



# Satyagraha : a Dead Weapon \*

BY V. G. KULKARNI

Mr. Nirmal Kumar Bose has attempted to make out a case in favour of "Satyagraha as a means of gaining Swaraj in terms of the masses in India." The article has been written as a reply to Comrade M. N. Roy who, "has made a strong case against Satyagraha." However, the arguments advanced appear not by way of replies to the various points raised by Roy for the purpose, but rather independent of them. In the present most critical period of our struggle for freedom such a discussion of the very "sheet anchor" of the Gandhian Way is most welcome and particularly so when the discussion is carried on a higher level without bringing in persons or personalities, on the merits of the case itself.

Mr. Bose's arguments can be briefly summarised as follows. That Swaraj can be won by non-violent non-co-operation, i.e. Satyagraha. (He nowhere tells how that can be done.) That mass organisation is necessary for the purpose and the constructive programme of Khadi, Harijan work, spread of primary education etc., are means for establishing mass-contact. The masses will be organised in such a way as, in the final stages of non-cooperation, will do without outside aid and will be courageous enough to stand the worst repression. "On the mental side," proceeds Mr. Bose, "they (the masses) must not hate the man who works the imperialist system. As he also is a victim of the same system, it will be enough, if absence of hatred is generated towards the "enemy."

"When Gandhi suspends movements.....we only believe he wants us to establish more intimate mass contact as a prelude to direct action.....He does not suspend the movement permanently. Whenever he has done so in the past, he has done so not for the fear of mob-violence but for organisational defects. This faith is there in us and because we consider Gandhi a wise general, that we are loyal to him."

Lastly comes the "more fundamental reason why we prefer the Gandhian method.....If we win by violence, and capture the State, then the party which wins may like to use violence....." The State can be won non-violently and then alone the abuses of State power can be checked. "This is what ultimately leads us to hold on to non-violence intellectually....."

In the beginning it is necessary for us to state that the common objective is "Swaraj in terms of the masses" and that Swaraj means "winning of State". Once our objective is thus made clear it will be possible to find out whether or not any particular method of struggle will lead us thereto or falls short thereof.

I stretched my eyes and eked my brain to find out whether any way towards the realisation of our goal, winning of State, was indicated by Mr. Bose. Except for the declaration that the State can be won by the masses when they become self-conscious etc., nothing more has been stated. Granting that the

---

\* A reply to the previous article published in the *Forward* of July 1, 1939.



Mr. Bose raises the bogey of violence as the "more fundamental" reason why he and others stick to non-violence. It would have been surprising if that would not have been raised. Because violence breeds violence, it is to be tabooed. Comrade Roy has times without number declared that to presume non-violence and violence as the only two alternatives is utterly mistaken. Those who are opposed to non-violence are not advocates of violence as such. They abhor violence more than anybody else. But they are opposed to place the means higher than the end itself. And consequently do not want to make any irrelevant conditions for the realisation of the goal. Gandhian way does that, places the means above the end and makes the end itself unrealisable. And as the imperialist system holds itself on force it can be removed by the creation of superior forces, only. As a matter of fact, in the process of this creation of superior forces, the forces of democracy, violence should have no place. Really speaking nowhere does it come in. But the rise of the forces of democracy signalises a challenge to the very existence of the imperialist system and therefore it launches a counter-offensive. Here comes the question of violence. The otherwise peaceful march of the democratic forces is attempted to be crushed violently by the imperialist system. So it is not violence as is wrongly termed, but is the application of force necessary to put down the imperialist opposition *which is violent*. The tragic history of Spain should be instructive to us. The forces of democracy triumphed peacefully. They held the Parliament—the Spanish Diet—without shedding a single drop of blood. But the old economic system which was threatened of extinction revolted and ultimately defeated democracy *violently*. It is therefore plain that if you want to fight imperialist system out of its existence you must be prepared to apply force necessary for the purpose. It is another thing how much force will be needed and at what stage of the struggle it will have to be applied. But to rule out of order any application of force is to refuse to march on the only road leading towards the goal.

The entire basis of Mr. Bose's argument is the *faith* in the infallibility of Gandhiji. He has unhesitatingly declared so. He has said that they *believe* so and so, and *hope* that certain things will happen and hence loyalty to Gandhiji and non-violence. But still he concludes that "we hope to rule our lives by the intellect and not emotions." Unfortunately, it is not intellect but faith, I dare say blind faith, on the authority of Gandhiji himself. "It is impossible", said Gandhiji, "that a thing essentially of the soul can ever be imparted through the intellect. It is trying to import faith in God through the intellect. It cannot be as it is a matter of heart.....*The intellect if anything acts as a barrier in matters of faith.*" (Harijan, dated 18. 6. 35) "He or she must have a living faith in non-violence. This is impossible without living faith in God." "And if the Congress can give such a demonstration, (of the virtue of non-violence and their sincerity of their conviction about it—author).....the Congress can achieve its goal without a violent struggle, and also without civil disobedience." (Harijan, dated 23. 10. 37). No further comment is necessary to prove that the whole Satyagraha

movement is based on faith. No use arguing about the intellectual appreciation or evaluation of it. I am constrained to repeat what Pandit Nehru said, "I do not see how political movement can be guided in this way." "No great movement can be carried on this basis; certainly not democratic movement." After laying down certain impossible conditions arbitrarily, to talk of free thinking is either idle or sheer hypocrisy.

The Satyagraha movement has played a useful function when it served to open the channel of popular discontent against imperialism. It simply opened it and stirred it, but did not indicate the way towards the declared aim of destroying the Satanic Government. The semi-religious appeal was useful to stir up the people when there was not sufficient consciousness and the discontent was in its elementary form. It did aim at a conscious revolt against imperialism. But times have changed. There is a tremendous advance in mass consciousness. "Fretting for immediate direct action", even by those refusing to discard Gandhism, is the surest sign of the volume of growing discontent at the bottom. The States People's movement, the workers' and peasants' struggle developing throughout the length and breadth of the country are sufficient proofs for the unprejudiced. Non-violent non-co-operation and civil resistance, these negative weapons, have had their days. But the masses to-day will not stop at this negative attitude of "suffering and sacrifice" but aim at positive economic and political results. So, there is a clash of ideas. Not that the advocates of Satyagraha see this. But they are afraid of violence. Gandhiji breathes violence in the air and considers the atmosphere utterly uncongenial for starting any struggle. It is not the fear of violence, but the onward march of the democratic forces, which will sweep away everything that comes in, even the illogical and irrelevant Gandhian inhibitions, towards the realisation of their goal, the capture of power. That is force in action. Gandhism is the negation of this kind of development. Gandhian leadership is conscious of these possible developments and hence the virtual indefinite suspension of Satyagraha. The suspension can therefore, be treated as permanent. The conditions recently laid down by Gandhiji on starting the struggle are beyond fulfilment, besides overruling any form of mass Satyagraha (*Harijan*, New technique in action, dated 10. 6. 39). Such being the case will it be unfair on the part of revolutionaries to presume that Satyagraha as a weapon in the struggle for freedom, has exhausted its potentialities and also looking to the dynamic situation, pregnant with immense potentialities of mass revolutionary outbreaks, not to be circumvented by the Gandhian limitations, will never be resumed? Any resumption of Satyagraha, therefore is rendered too remote. These and such other considerations led Comrade Roy boldly to advocate that the *Bramhasutra* is no more useful for our struggle for democratic freedom and as such must be discarded in favour of higher forms of struggle consciously leading towards the capture of power. And those people who refusing to recognise this reality stubbornly sit tight, preventing the march forwards, must also share the same fate.

---

## Our Differences

The way in which Mr. V. G. Kulkarni has tried to show the hollowness of the Satyagrahis' case and establish the Socialist one in his article "*Satyagraha : a dead weapon*" is hardly tainted by considerations other than purely scientific,—and as I read it, our points of agreement and of difference came up all the more clearly before my mind. When two persons draw different conclusions from exactly the same series of facts, it only means that any further talking can never convince each other. Perhaps it is good at such moments to state clearly how we stand in relation to one another.

Let none of us claim that all truth is on his side ; both have our premises to start with. And so far as the premises are concerned both are logically equally assailable. Whatever a socialist may say about science, his fundamentals are not so much matters of science as of faith ; and the same is true of Satyagraha. I shall take an example. Socialists believe that ultimately victory will come to the working classes. Personally, I have found no justification for this belief in science ; as a result of fighting one another, mankind may die out like any of the extinct reptiles without victory ever coming to any one side. The only justification for the belief lies in faith. Similarly, when a Satyagrahi believes that it is possible to replace a world guided by habit by one guided by will, I know it is not science but faith. But I admit the fact that even these faiths of the Socialists and of the Satyagrahis do work wonders as long as they are there. They can change the face of humanity although they have no foundation in cold science.

Recognizing this fact as such, I can only refuse to try to change the faith of another man who works best under a different mental atmosphere than what I require for myself. I shall therefore try to enunciate clearly those points of agreement and

of difference as have cropped up in course of the two articles in question, before we part company in a friendly spirit. Unfortunately, I do not know if this will be mutual ; at least there will be no lack of it on my part.

1. We agree with Mr. Kulkarni when he says that the State is based upon force, and the imperialist State has got to be destroyed by superior exercise of force. The difference lies in the fact that we hold such force can be exercised during the operation of non-violent non-cooperation, which he believes is all bunkum.

2. We quite agree that the State has no soul, and cannot be changed like a human being ; one State has to be replaced by another. Our attitude towards the capitalist State is one of hatred, we want to end it. But we try not to extend this hatred towards those who work the imperialist system, those who, according to Mr. Kulkarni are "conscious supporters of it to safeguard their interests, for which it has been created."

We differ from one another clearly in the attitude we bring to bear upon the upholders of imperialism, but are completely in agreement so far as our attitude towards the capitalist State is concerned.

3. Mr. Kulkarni draws a distinction between violence used for selfish ends, as by capitalists, and violence used for defensive purposes, as by the working classes. He holds that the two are different in kind. The former knows no end, while the latter ends when victory is achieved.

We have not the faith that it will end, for the final victory may never come. Violence used for defensive purposes has also been known historically to cause degeneration within the erstwhile exploited or within a party operating on behalf of the exploited. The present Comintern does not seem to be an exception to this rule.

So we prefer to emphasize non-violence as a corrective against violence. Just as Mr. Kulkarni has the *faith* that defensive violence of the working classes will end the moment

complete victory is achieved, so also we have the *faith* that non-violence alone can root out violence, nothing else can.

4. One point which has not been raised by any of us previously may perhaps be profitably discussed here. While reading *The State and Revolution*, it was clear, Lenin recognized that man lives more by habit than by will. So he decided to base his revolutionary tactics upon a radical change of habits, to start with.

But we believe that the good attained in this manner is temporary. In order to make it permanent, such a plan requires the continuous existence of a party, like the Comintern, which will keep these habits at the proper moral level. Otherwise men may slide back into capitalistic habits once more. But where is the certainty that the organization of true men itself will not degenerate? Many churches—I use the word advisedly—have been known to degenerate even when they started with the best of intentions. The belief that the Comintern itself will never degenerate is not based on science, but on faith. But it is not worthless on that account. Let Mr. Kulkarni have that faith; we shall have our own.

We believe it is better to build upon will than upon habit for effecting a comparatively more permanent cure. In Satyagraha, a man puts his reliance not so much upon an organization of Satyagrahis as upon the principle of non-violence, and in the last heat he has to depend upon himself. It stimulates the will at the expense of habit. Whether Satyagraha can operate successfully where large masses of men are concerned may, of course, be legitimately questioned. But why not try, even if it seems difficult to break men's habit of doing without the will? If it is good, it is worth trying.

Thus Satyagraha appeals to us because it is based upon the appreciation of the active instead of the passive element in human character.

This is so far as our points of agreement and difference are concerned. There is only one more point to which, I shall unwillingly make a reference. In our first article we spoke about

a certain faith we have in Gandhi. Mr. Kulkarni has characterized this as a blind faith in the "infallibility of Mr. Gandhi." That is hardly doing justice to us. For it is not true that our faith in non-violence is there *because* we have faith in Gandhiji. It is the other way round. It is just because we do not see how violence can end violence, but rather believe that non-violence alone has the power to end violence, and also because we have observed that Gandhiji's actions have been consistently inspired by non-violence, and that for him complete non-violence means the complete extinction of all forms of exploitation, that we still retain faith in him.

Mr. Kulkarni will probably say that Gandhi has betrayed the working classes, diverted or channelled their rising tide of rebellion into useless paths and thus become an ally of capitalism, which is completely violent. But here we do not agree. He may have had to retreat now and then ; but we still do not doubt that his object is to convert the world into a band of labourers having no room for idlers or exploiters. In it every man will have to perform "bread-labour" and no one will possess anything which others cannot also possess if they need it.

Thus our differences with Mr. Kulkarni lie not merely in certain fundamental beliefs but also with regard to our opinion regarding facts. As time progresses, we shall perhaps approach nearer one another so far as facts and opinions based on them are concerned ; but with regard to fundamentals, we shall evidently remain far away from one another. Further discussion will hardly be of any use, we shall not be able to help each other in that way.

---



## An Interview with Mahatma Gandhi

On the 9th and 10th November 1934, we had a fairly long interview with Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha. The questions related to fundamental social and political matters, and therefore a report of the interview will be both of interest and importance to the public. The report was sent to Gandhiji for correction, and he sent it back in the following shape for publication in the *Modern Review*.

*Question One.* While working in a village, we have found that the chief obstacle to any real improvement in the condition of the villagers are two in number :

(1) They have forgotten the art of co-operation among themselves or of joining hands in order to resist any encroachment upon their rights.

(2) They live practically enslaved by those who merely own the land while doing no work, and control the money-resources of the village. This slavery, which is due partly to their own character, and our complete neglect of their education, have left the masses absolutely devoid of any will of their own.

What should be our principal object in khadi-work or other forms of village reconstruction ? Khadi-work in some parts of Bengal has degenerated into a mere method of giving a little relief to the villagers, while it has failed to restore the will which alone can bring about any lasting transformation in their condition.

Our question is, should khadi be merely that sort of humanitarian work or should we use it chiefly as an instrument of political education ? Our experience has been that unless the ultimate objective is kept clearly in mind, it degenerates easily into a work of no significance.

*Answer One.* The two issues of khadi and political organisation should be kept absolutely separate. There must be no

confusion. The aim of khadi is humanitarian ; but so far as India is concerned, its effect is bound to be immensely political.

The Salvation Army wants to teach people about God. But they come with bread. For the poor bread is their God. Similarly we should bring food to the mouths of the people through khadi. If we succeed in breaking the idleness of the people through khadi, they will begin to listen to us. Whatever else the government might do, it does leave some food for the villagers. Unless we can bring food to them, why should the people listen to us ? When we have taught them what they can do through their own efforts, then they will want to listen to us.

That trust can best be generated through khadi. While working out the khadi programme, our aim should be purely humanitarian, that is economic. We should leave out all political considerations whatsoever. But it is bound to produce important political consequences which nobody can prevent and nobody need deplore.

*Question Two.* Could we not start small battles on local and specific issues against capitalism in the villages and use them as a means of strengthening the people or bringing about a sense of co-operation among them, in preference to the khadi method ? When we have a choice between the two, which should we prefer ? If we have to sacrifice all the work that we have built up in the villages in connection with khadi while fighting against the money-lender or the landed proprietor, for, say, a reduction in the rate of interest or increase in the share of agricultural produce, then what shall we do,—provided the latter is more liable to evoke self-confidence among the villagers than the khadi method of organisation ?

*Answer Two.* It is a big proviso you have added at the end of the question. I cannot say if fights on local and specific issues against capitalists are more likely to generate the kind of determination and courage needed in a non-violent campaign. But if I concede you that point, then khadi would have to be sacrificed under the circumstances you quote. As a practical man, claiming to be an expert in non-violent methods, I should

advise you not to go in for that type of work in order to train the masses in self-consciousness and attainment of power.

We are fighting for Swaraj in the non-violent way. If many workers in different parts of India engage in local battles of the sort you describe, then in times of necessity, the people all over India will not be able to make a common cause in a fight for Swaraj. Before civil disobedience can be practised on a vast scale, people must learn the art of civil or voluntary obedience. Our obedience to the government is through fear ; and the reaction against it is either violence itself or that species of it, which is cowardice. But through khadi we teach people the art of civil obedience to an institution which they have built up for themselves. Only when they have learnt that art, can they successfully disobey something which they want to destroy in the non-violent way. That is why I should advise all workers not to fritter their fighting strength in many-sided battles, but to concentrate on peaceful khadi-work in order to educate the masses into a condition necessary for a successful practice of non-violent non-co-operation. With their own exploitation, boycott of foreign cloth through picketting may easily be violent ; through the use of khadi it is most natural and absolutely non-violent.

*Question Three.* Is love or non-violence compatible with possession or exploitation in any shape or form ? If possession and non-violence cannot go together, then do you advocate the maintenance of private ownership of land or factories as an unavoidable evil which will continue so long as individuals are not ripe or educated enough to do without it ? If it be such a step, would it not be better to own all the land through the State and place the State under the control of the masses ?

*Answer Three.* Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically when there is perfect love there must be perfect non-possession. The body is our last possession. So a man can only exercise perfect love and be completely dispossessed, if he is prepared to embrace death and renounces his body for the sake of human service. But that is true in theory only. In actual life, we can hardly exercise

perfect love, for the body as a possession will always remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect. So that perfection in love or non-possession will remain an unattainable ideal as long as we are alive, but towards which we must ceaselessly strive.

Those who own money now, are asked to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.

Q. If you say that private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put up with it ?

A. That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money, but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of mankind.

Q. Why then not have State-ownership in place of private property and thus minimize violence ?

A. It is better than private ownership. But that too is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.

Q. Let us come to a specific instance. Suppose an artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them, so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one person's folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense in which you would like to have him, do you

not think the State would be justified in taking away those things from him with the minimum use of violence ?

A. Yes, the State will, as a matter of fact, take away those things, and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees ; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny, and confiscation ordered where necessary—with or without compensation as the case demanded.

What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship ; as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State-ownership.

Q. Then, sir, shall we take it that the fundamental difference between you and the Socialists is that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will ; that being the reason why you strive for self-correction while they try to build up a system under which men will find it impossible to exercise their desire for exploiting others ?

A. While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the State has really lived for the poor.

Q. But have not those cases of trusteeship which you sometimes cite been due to your personal influence rather than to anything else ? Teachers like you come infrequently. Would it not be better, therefore, to trust to some organization to effect the necessary changes in man, rather than depend upon the casual advent of men like yourself ?

A. Leaving me aside, you must remember that the influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teachings of each prophet like Mohammed, Buddha or Jesus, there was a permanent portion and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. It is only because we try to keep up the permanent with the impermanent aspects of their teaching that there is so much distortion in religious practice today. But that apart you can see that the influence of these men has sustained after they have passed away.

Moreover, what I disapprove of is an organization based on force which a State is. Voluntary organization there must be.

*Question Four.* What then, sir, is your ideal social order ?

*Answer Four.* I believe that every man is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of those limitations the law of *varna* was deduced. It establishes certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition. Whilst recognizing limitations the law of *varna* admitted of no distinctions of high and low ; on the one hand it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labours and on the other it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbour. This great law has been degraded and fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implications of this law are fully understood and given effect to.

Q. Do you not think that in ancient India there was much difference in economic status and social privileges between the four *varnas* ?

A. That may be historically true. But misapplication or an imperfect understanding of the law must not lead to the ignoring of the law itself. By constant striving we have to enrich the inheritance left to us. This law determines the duties of man. Rights follow from a due performance of duties. It is the fashion nowadays to ignore duties and assert or rather usurp rights.

Q. If you are so keen upon reviving *Varnashrama*, why do you not favour violence as the quickest means ?

A. Surely the question does not arise. Definition and performance of duties rules out violence altogether. Violence becomes imperative when an attempt is made to assert rights without reference to duties.

Q. Should we not confine our pursuit of Truth to ourselves and not press it upon the world, because, we know that it is ultimately limited in character ?

A. You cannot so circumscribe truth even if you try. Every expression of truth has in it the seeds of propagation, even as the sun cannot hide its light.

## Gandhiji on Machines \*

There are all kinds of superstitions regarding Gandhiji's economic ideas. Some believe that he is against all machinery as such, others believe that he sticks exactly to the opinions which he held long ago with regard to machines and industrial organization. And both write against Gandhiji without turning over the pages of *Young India* or more easily available books where the development of his ideas is historically recorded. It is unfortunate that even eminent scientists have indulged in such pastimes, although they themselves would refuse to listen to another scientist who was not perfectly up-to-date with regard to his information. As if, it is not necessary to be scientific when one is dealing with an unscientific subject like Gandhiji or his ideas.

It is because things like this are constantly happening round us that we consider the present book to be a very timely publication. It contains twenty-six articles of Gandhiji written between July 1934 and February 1938, and seventeen more by Mahadev Desai, J. C. Kumarappa and others, relating to some economic questions connected with rural India. Personally, Gandhiji is committed to certain definite economic opinions embodied partly in the two organizations with which he is closely connected : the All-India Spinners' Association and the All-India Village Industries Association. Some have considered these organizations to be of a reactionary character, holding that they set back the clock instead of leading India towards further industrialization which is her inevitable goal. We should, therefore, acquaint ourselves fully with the why and wherefore of these two movements before coming to any final opinion regarding them. And in this task, the present book will be of great help to us.

---

\* Being a review of *Cent-per-cent Swadeshi or The Economics of Village Industries* (Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad).



On reading the articles carefully, we find that in Gandhiji's mind, there is no fear of the machine as such, but only of the present industrial system, which can be considered quite apart from the machines which it employs ( p. 125 ). In the industrial system, Gandhiji thinks, man has been made subservient to machines. It is not man whose needs dictate what should be produced, but machines which dictate how much goods should be produced, so that they might be run with profit to the owner ( p. 139 ). In the last analysis it appears that the present industrial system has formed a league with certain dark powers which reside within the human breast, namely, greed and selfishness, cruelty and a lack of love for human beings—and these together have brought and are bringing about exploitation of mankind. It is this state of affairs that Gandhiji wishes to combat in order to restore man to his rightful place in the scheme of things. Man should be master of machines and not machines that of man. It is this idea which lies behind his economic programme ; and if man becomes the master, he does not mind how much of machinery he uses. In fact, he would welcome all improvements which lighten human labour, that is, are of proved human good. The question was asked him :

“But what about the great inventions ? You would have nothing to do with electricity ?” He answered : “Who said so ? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do ? Will you give them work, or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work ?

“I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphixiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour, has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by

the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many" (pp. 125-6).

There is one thing more which strikes us as very significant in the articles under review. Socialists agree with Gandhiji in so far as the human question is concerned. They also wish to restore man to his mastery over machines. They also wish machines to be driven by love and not by selfishness, greed and cruelty as at present. But their means of bringing about the transformation are different. They hold that the State should be captured first of all by the working classes before machines can be run for human welfare instead of for capitalist gain. That implies that every one should concentrate in bringing about the political revolution before anything else can be undertaken. Socialists, therefore, look upon Gandhiji's economic programme as a reactionary step which is likely to sidetrack the coming revolution.

But a careful study of Gandhiji's articles leaves a different impression upon our mind. He does not rate the State as highly as his critics do. At bottom he is a philosophical anarchist, who, however, believes in the minimum existence of the State as a practical necessity. But he values voluntary endeavour more than anything else. To him a good life based upon voluntary effort is better than a good life formed under compulsion of the State. The former is true and stays, the latter is untrue and does not stay long. Gandhiji believes that much can be done by voluntary effort, though all cannot be done in that way. For that, we would require the power of the State in our hands. But that is no reason why we should neglect doing what can be done right now (p. 63). If we believe in an economic morality which looks upon all exploitation as wrong, why should we not start building our lives accordingly from the present moment?

In this work of human reconstruction, we should leave politics alone. This is work in which many can join, while

politics can have an appeal to a limited few. Even if it be for the sake of efficiency, we ought to keep political and national reconstruction apart from one another. Otherwise, "it would defeat the very end that I have in view. I want the material and moral growth of the villages for itself ; and if it is achieved, it would be full satisfaction of my ambition. Similarly, if ever I should have to organise civil disobedience, it would be organised independently of any other activity" (p. 53). But who can deny that if the inhabitants of rural India are better organized and some life instilled into their starving bodies, if they learn self-help and the art of carrying on the work of big organizations by themselves, they will exercise a great deal of influence over India's political future ?

But we must remember with Gandhiji that politics and the State should not be turned into a fetish, the State should not occupy the position of a god before whom the citizen surrenders absolutely his individuality in the faith that in its turn it will nourish him and protect him. Politics are only a part of our lives, and the State may not absorb or direct more than a part of our being. Above all lies the influence of the individual in all matters of human progress. If the State seems to function, it is because the individual consciously or unconsciously co-operates with it. It is in this appreciation of the active aspect of human life in place of the passive one, that the chief difference between Gandhiji and the Socialists lies. In essence Gandhiji's position is like that of a Vedantist who holds that *Daiva* is no more than the accumulation of past *Purushakaras*, and that any day an active *Purushakara* can overcome the influence of centuries of *Daiva*. It is thoughts of this kind which come to us as we turn over page after page of the present book.

We therefore recommend it wholeheartedly to those who would understand Gandhiji whether with a view to working with him or against him. To both the book will prove helpful.

Our thanks are also due to the publishers for having brought it out in due season. We would, however, request them to follow it up with a further collection of Gandhiji's earlier articles on the



## Gandhi on Industrialism and Machinery

Many of us have very vague ideas about Gandhi's opinions regarding different matters. Thus, for example, some believe that he is against all machinery and all forms of modern civilization. Others again hold that he is willing to use machinery to the extent it is consistent with human welfare, *i.e.* for purposes of lightening the load of all men on earth. And each can quote passages in order to support his own view.

But this procedure is entirely unscientific. For a scientific study of Gandhi's opinions, or, for that matter, of any other person's opinions, we should arrange the utterances in chronological order, and then try to understand each in relation to the circumstances under which it was written. Thus, a sermon on bodily labour addressed to those who habitually shirk it, should not be taken as a general advice given to all mankind. It would be out of place among a group of people composed of those who sweat from morning till night for their daily bread and yet have not enough to live a decent life. Each utterance of Gandhi should therefore be viewed in its proper context; and then only shall we be able to find out how his ideas and opinions on a particular subject have changed in course of time, when they have changed at all. Sometimes we may even find that only the connotation of certain terms have changed for him, while his fundamental opinions have remained substantially unaltered.

Let us, therefore, proceed to do so with regard to the question of industrialism and machinery.

In 1908, while in South Africa, Gandhi published a small book in Gujrati, which was later on translated into English under the title *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. That book contained a severe condemnation of what was termed "modern civilization". In trying to explain his point, Gandhi discussed the influence of railways and of machine-made goods upon Indian

life and came to the conclusion that they were wholly evil. His argument was :

"Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the English gates. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization, it represents a great sin.

"The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. If the machinery came grows in our country it will become an unhappy land. It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use slimy Manchester cloth, than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth, we would only waste our money, but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I call in support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men....I fear we will have to admit that moneyed men support British rule ; their interest is bound up with its stability....Impoverished India can become free, but it will be hard for an India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom.....It is machinery that has impoverished India. I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery" (Chapter XIX).

In the above book, therefore, Gandhi levelled a general charge against machinery as it was the symbol of the enslavement of human beings. Evidently his charge was not against machinery as such but in so far as it was the cause of human degradation. It is very important to remember this last point. For Gandhi does not appear to have departed from this position even now, although the meaning of the term "machinery" has undergone some amount of modification for him. In 1908, the term evidently meant for him something more than machinery itself, for he included in it the industrial system which went along with the use of power-driven mills in India at that time. The distinction between industrialism and machinery had not yet

been drawn by him. As a matter of fact, his knowledge or experience of machines was very limited.

It is interesting to remember that later on Gandhi wrote about his ignorance of machines during this period in the following terms :

"I do not remember to have seen a handloom or a spinning wheel till the year 1908, when in *Hind Swaraj* I described it as the panacea for the growing pauperism of India...Even in 1915, when I returned to India from South Africa, I had not actually seen a spinning wheel. When the Satyagraha Ashram was founded at Sabarmati, we introduced a few hand-looms there. But no sooner had we done this, than we found ourselves up against a difficulty. All of us belonged either to the liberal professions or to business ; not one of us was an artisan" (*Auto. II.*, 555-6).

Gandhi's ideas regarding economic problems seem to have taken a more concrete and realistic shape during the Non-cooperation Movement of 1919-20. He became more specific with regard to his ideals of production and distribution. He began to say :

"Multiplication of mills cannot solve the problem. They can only cause concentration of money and labour and thus make confusion worse confounded".( *Y. I.*, 10. 12. 19 ).

"We want to organise our national power not by adopting the best methods of production only but by the best methods of *both* the production and the distribution" ( *Y. I.*, 28. 7. 20 ).

"What India needs is not the concentration of capital in a few hands, but its distribution so as to be within easy reach of the 7½ lakhs of villages that make this continent" (*Y.I.*, 23. 3. 21).

His utterances on Khadi made about this date, as well as on subsequent occasions, as the following quotations will show, lay stress upon the same theme, viz. that distribution on an equal or equitable basis should be organized along with production. Mills and machinery were bad because they tended to the concentration of wealth in some hands, and leave the rest without the wherewithal to feed or clothe themselves. This charge was thus

not against machinery as such; but against the economic system which was responsible for its introduction and expansion. He had thus not departed in 1921 from the position of 1908.

"Our mills cannot today spin enough for our wants, and if they did, they will not keep down the prices unless they were compelled. They are frankly money-makers and will not therefore regulate prices according to the needs of the nation. Hand-spinning is therefore designed to put millions of rupees in the hands of poor villagers. Every agricultural country requires a supplementary industry to enable the peasants to utilise the spare hours. Such industry for India has always been spinning" ( Y. I., 16. 2. 21 ).

"I would favour the use of the most elaborate machinery if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness be avoided. I have suggested hand-spinning as the only ready means of driving away penury and making famine of work and wealth impossible. The spinning wheel itself is a piece of valuable machinery, and in my own humble way I have tried to secure improvements in it in keeping with the special conditions of India" ( Y. I., 3.11.21 ).

The last is a very significant statement. For here we first find him drawing a line between machinery of one kind and another. The charkha, his *Kamdhenu*, his *jam-i-jam*, revealed to him for the first time, perhaps, that machinery as such was not bad; it could be used lawfully as well as unlawfully; for human good as well as for human exploitation. This became increasingly clear to him between 1925 and 1927. He began to say :

"That use of machinery is lawful which subserves the interests of all" ( Y. I., 15. 4. 26 ).

He came to recognise that :

"Machinery has its place : it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour. I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine, but I know that it is criminal to displace hand-labour by the introduction of power-driven spindles unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their home" ( Y. I., 5. 11. 25 ).



He described the Non-cooperation Movement as :

“An attempt to introduce, if it is at all possible, a human or the humane spirit among the men behind the machinery. Organisation of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few and for the exploitation of many I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organisation of machinery of the present age is of that type. The movement of the spinning wheel is an organised attempt to displace machinery from that state of exclusiveness and exploitation and to place it in its proper state. Under my scheme, therefore, men in charge of machinery will *think not of themselves or even of the nation to which they belong but of the whole human race*.<sup>1</sup> Thus Lancashire men will cease to use their machinery for exploiting India and other countries but on the contrary they will devise means of enabling India to convert in her own villages her cotton into cloth. Nor will Americans under my scheme seek to enrich themselves by exploiting the other races of the earth through their inventive skill” ( Y. I., 17. 9. 25 ).

“Khaddar does not seek to destroy all machinery but it does regulate its use and check its weedy growth. It uses machinery for the service of the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery” ( Y. I., 17. 3. 27 ).

Gandhi's ideas regarding machinery thus showed some amount of change. In 1908, machines had been for him a symbol of industrialism, which was bad because it led to human degeneration. But now the same love for mankind, the desire to lighten human labour, led him to distinguish between machinery and machinery. And his own economic programme of khadi was really intended to restore machinery to what he now began to call “its proper state” in the scheme of human life. His idea regarding large scale machinery was bound to be affected thereby. And we find proof of that in an utterance of 24. 2. 27 :

“Do I seek to destroy the mill industry, I have often been asked. If I did I should not have pressed for the abolition of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Italics ours.

excise duty. I want the mill industry to prosper—only I do not want it to prosper at the expense of the country. On the contrary if the interests of the country demand that the industry should go, I should let it go without the slightest compunction."

But at the same time as Gandhi was drawing nearer to machinery in its capacity of lightening the burden of human toil, his condemnation of the industrial system gained in emphasis. We find it clothed in severer language from 1926 to 1931 than in the earlier period of 1908-19. On 7. 10. 26, he wrote :

"The present distress is undoubtedly insufferable. Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy. The evil does not lie in the use of bullock-carts. It lies in our selfishness and want of consideration for our neighbours. If we have no love for our neighbours, no change, however revolutionary, can do us any good".

"Indeed, the West has had a surfeit of industrialism and exploitation. The fact is that this industrial civilization is a disease because it is *all* evil. Let us not be deceived by catch-words and phrases. I have no quarrel with steamships and telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end. They are in no way indispensable for the permanent welfare of the human race. Now that we know the use of steam and electricity, we should be able to use them on due occasion and after we have learnt to avoid industrialism. Our concern is therefore to destroy industrialism at any cost" ( Y. I., 7. 10. 26 ).

"Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. It is because these factors are getting less and less every day for England that its number of unemployed is mounting up daily. The Indian boycott was but a fleabite. And if that is the state of England, a vast country like India cannot expect to benefit by industrialisation. In fact, India, when it begins to exploit other nations—as it must do if it becomes industrialised—will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrialising

India to exploit other nations? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation, viz., that we can find work for our 300 millions unemployed, but England can find none for its three millions and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England? The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, Japan, France, Germany. It has competitors in the handful of mills in India, and as there has been an awakening in India, even so there will be an awakening in South Africa with its vastly richer resources—natural, mineral and human. The mighty English look quite pigmies before the mighty races of Africa. They are noble savages after all, you will say. They are certainly noble, but no savages and in the course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares. And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India?" (Y. I., 12.11.31). "What is the cause of the present chaos? It is exploitation, I will not say of the weaker nations by the stronger, but of sister nations by sister nations. And my fundamental objection to machinery rests on the fact that it is machinery that has enabled these nations to exploit others. In itself it is a wooden thing and can be turned to good purpose or bad. But it is easily turned to a bad purpose as we know" (Y. I., 22.10.31).

Gandhi had thus changed from his attitude of 1908 when machinery was for him a symbol of the evil "modern civilization". He now narrowed down his charge, which became industrialism, i. e. centralized forms of production with profit as the motive. Machinery was absolved, in his mind, of part of its former blame and became "a wooden thing". Part of machinery could legitimately be used for human welfare.

"Are you against all machinery?"

"My answer is emphatically, No. But, I am against its indiscriminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by the seeming triumph of machinery. But simple tools and instruments and such machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of millions of cottages I should welcome" (Y. I., 17. 6. 26).

"What I object to, is the *craze* for machinery, not machinery, as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour', till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might" (Y. I., 13.11.24).

"Then you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today?"

"I would unhesitatingly say, Yes ; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be over-worked and machinery, instead of becoming a hindrance, will be a help. I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but its limitation."

"When logically argued out, that would seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go."

"It might have to go, but I must make one thing clear. The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine."

"But in that case there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type."

"Yes, but I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalised, or State-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the conditions of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as to the State, or the man who owns it. The present mad rush will cease, and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The sewing machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian consideration, and not greed, the motive. Replace greed by love and everything will come right" (*Y. I.*, 13.11.24).

It was his belief that :

"If India takes to Khaddar and all it means, I do not lose the hope of India taking only as much of the modern machinery system as may be considered necessary for the amenities of life and for life-saving purposes" (*Y. I.*, 24. 7. 24). •

The writings of 1924 thus marked another point of departure in his scheme of things. With his touchstone of human welfare, he had already learnt to draw a line between machinery and industrialism. Now he seems to have recognized that all forms of industrial organization were not necessarily wrong. In certain cases, the centralized use of machinery might be unavoidable if the object was the lightening of human labour. When it was so, he would not object to it if it was conducted under ideal conditions and under full social control. In other words, industrial organization itself was now losing some of its former sting for him, and he was prepared to use it under certain conditions. He carried the same idea in 1937, and evidently carries it even today.

"You are against the machine age, I see."

"To say that is to caricature my views. I am not against machinery as such, but I am totally opposed to it when it masters us."

"You would not industrialize India?"

"I would, indeed, in my sense of the term. The village communities should be revived. Indian villages produced and supplied to the Indian towns and cities all their wants. India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands."

"You would then go back to the natural economy?"

"Yes. Otherwise I should go back to the city. I am quite capable of running a big enterprise, but I deliberately sacrificed the ambition, not as a sacrifice, but because my heart rebelled against it. For I should have no share in the spoliation of the nation that is going on from day to day. But I am industrializing the village in a different way" (*H.*, 27. 2. 37).

"The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villages as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others" (*H.*, 29. 8. 36).

We thus come to the conclusion that formerly Gandhi was against all machinery in so far as it was a symbol of "modern civilization." The latter was bad, not because it was modern, but because it was demonstrably responsible for the impoverishment and degradation of human beings. Later on, with his increasing experience of the spinning wheel, he drew a line between machinery designed for human good and that designed for human exploitation. On the whole, he found that centralized power-machinery was more readily capable of

being used for purposes of exploitation than decentralized machinery.

The supreme consideration for him has always been the welfare of the individual ; and he has subjected all things to this supreme test. Just as his insistence upon human welfare led him to absolve machinery itself from part of its blame, so now he began to find that even certain forms of centralized industrial organization could be turned to human good. But these had then to be under full social control and operated only under ideal conditions.

Thus Gandhi has drawn nearer and nearer to the socialist point of view regarding machinery in practice, although he has kept himself remarkably independent in theory. At bottom, he prefers the village to the city, and would have as much of machinery as the villages can profitably absorb. He would like India to be a land of self-contained villages and no cities. If cities are proved to be inevitable for human welfare, he would vote for them but still look upon them as a necessary evil. It is here that he differs most from the champions of industrialization. Some time ago, he wrote :

"Remember that your non-violence cannot operate effectively unless you have faith in the spinning wheel. I would ask you to read *Hind Swaraj* with my eyes and see therein the chapter on how to make India non-violent. You cannot build non-violence on factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages. Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process. Rural economy as I have conceived it eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have therefore to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent, and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning wheel" (*H.*, 4. 11. 39).

## Gandhi on Riches and Rich Men

In his earlier speeches, Gandhiji was in the habit of using passionate language against riches and rich men. A portion of the speech delivered in February 1916, on the occasion of the opening of the Benares Hindu University, may be cited as a typical example :

"I now introduce you to another scene. His Highness the Maharajah who presided yesterday over our deliberations, spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it." But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen : 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India'...Sir, when I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say : 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists.' Over seventy-five per cent of the population are agriculturists and Mr. Higginbotham told us last night in his own felicitious language that they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. But there cannot be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it" (*Natesan*, 322-23 ).

In the same year, he laid down in a speech in Madras, something which may be considered to be his basic view with regard to economic morality :



"We are thieves in a way if we take anything that we do not need for immediate use, and keep it from somebody else who needs it. It is a fundamental law of Nature, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took only enough for him and no more, there will be no poverty in the world, and there will be no man dying of starvation in this world. And so long as we have got this inequality, so long I shall have to say we are thieves."

Then he went on to say :

"I am no socialist, and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions, but I do say that personally those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this doctrine ( of non-thieving )" ( *Ganesh*, p. 189 ).

The same sentiment is expressed in his book entitled *Ethical Religion* ( date of first publication ? ) in the following terms :

"If all men realised the obligation of service, they would regard it as a sin to amass wealth ; and then, there would be no inequalities of wealth, and consequently no famine or starvation" ( Chapter VIII ).

Gandhi thus already held that the pursuit of wealth was a sin ; it made it difficult for a man to follow a truly moral life. Such a life could only be built upon the foundation of a voluntary restriction of wants. These were days when he had not yet actively identified himself with the struggle for political liberation ; and so, more emphasis was laid by him upon voluntary effort than upon reform through State-made laws for the eradication of poverty. We shall see, later on, how his views on this subject underwent a certain amount of modification.

But there has always been another, and a more important, reason with Gandhi why he puts so much reliance upon voluntary effort for bringing about social equality. He considers that,

"No action which is not voluntary can be called moral. So long as we act like machines, there can be no question of morality. If we want to call an action moral, it should have

been done consciously, and as a matter of duty" (*E. R.*, Chap. IV).

If social equality were brought about through law, Gandhi would not consider it to be an enduring thing. So he wrote in the *Harijan* of 29.6.35 :

"Brahma created his people with the duty of sacrifice laid upon them and said, 'By this do you flourish. Let it be the fulfiller of all your desires'... 'He who eats without performing this sacrifice eats stolen bread'—thus says the Gita. 'Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow', says the Bible. Sacrifices may be of many kinds. One of them may well be bread-labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease, and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.

"This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is, the law of our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal."

Thus Gandhi's attitude towards wealth and social or economic equality has been the same from 1916 to 1935. But his references to rich men have always been more subdued than towards riches in general. For he holds that a man is very often the creature of circumstances, and so deserves pity instead of condemnation, which should be reserved for the impersonal situation. Even so, there have been occasions when he has flared up against persons and classes, as the two following passages, written in 1924 and 1922, will show.

"What does the correspondent mean when he refers to 'lower orders who know no responsibility and can anyway make both ends meet?' Is he sure that 'lower orders know no

responsibility' ? Have they no feelings, are they not injured by an angry word ? In what sense are they lower except in their poverty for which we middle classes are responsible ? And may I inform my correspondent that the 'lower orders' not only do not 'make two ends meet' but the majority of them are living in a state of semi-starvation ? If the middle class people voluntarily suffer losses for the sake of the 'lower classes' it would be but tardy reparation for their participation in their exploitation. I invite the correspondent to think in terms of the masses and identify himself with his less fortunate countrymen" (Y. I., 17. 7. 24).

"Little do the town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history" (Y. I., 23. 3. 22).

Gandhi has also been passionate in his appeal to the middle classes to dispossess themselves voluntarily.

"The village work frightens us. We who are town-bred find it trying to take to village life. Our bodies in many cases do not respond to the hard life. But it is a difficulty which we have to face boldly, even heroically, if our desire is to establish Swaraj for the people, not to substitute one class rule by another, which may be even worse. Hitherto the villagers have died in their thousands so that we might live. Now we might have to die so that they may live. The difference will be fundamental. The former have died unknowingly and involuntarily. Their enforced sacrifice has degraded us. If now

we die knowingly, our sacrifice will ennoble us and the whole nation. Let us not flinch from the necessary sacrifice, if we will live as an independent self-respecting nation" (Y. I., 17. 4. 24).

In 1927, Gandhi addressed the students of the Benares Hindu University and said :

"Panditji (Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya) has collected and has been still collecting lakhs and lakhs of rupees for you from Rajas and Maharajas. The money apparently comes from these wealthy princes, but in reality it comes from the millions of our poor. For unlike Europe the rich of our land grow rich at the expense of our villagers, the bulk of whom have to go without a square meal a day. The education that you receive today is thus paid for by the starving villagers who will never have the chance of such an education. It is your duty to refuse to have an education that is not within reach of the poor, but I do not ask that of you today. I ask you to render a slight return to the poor by doing a little *yajna* for them. For he who eats without doing his *yajna* steals his food, says the Gita. The *yajna* of our age and for us is the spinning wheel. Day in and day out I have been talking about it, writing about it" (Y. I., 20. 1. 27).

His object in the propagation of Khadi was, as he said, the distribution of wealth among the toiling millions in place of its concentration in a few hands, as had been brought about through mills and machinery.

"I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of few, but in the hands of all" (Y. I., 13. 11. 24).

"Our mills cannot today spin enough for our wants, and if they did, they will not keep down the prices unless they were compelled. They are frankly money-makers and will not therefore regulate prices according to the needs of the nation. Hand-spinning is therefore designed to put millions of rupees in the hands of poor villagers. Every agricultural country requires a supplementary industry to enable the peasants to utilise the spare

hours. Such industry for India has always been spinning" (Y. I., 16. 2. 21).

Addressing certain Zemindars in 1929, Gandhi said :

"A model Zemindar would at once reduce much of the burden the ryot is now bearing, he would come in intimate touch with the ryots and know their wants and inject hope into them in the place of despair which is killing the very life out of them. He will not be satisfied with the ryot's ignorance of the laws of sanitation and hygiene. He will reduce himself to poverty in order that the ryot may have the necessities of life. He will study the economic condition of the ryots under his care, establish schools in which he will educate his own children side by side with those of the ryots. He will purify the village well and the village tank. He will teach the ryot to sweep his roads and clean his latrines by himself doing this necessary labour. He will throw open without reserve his own gardens for the unrestricted use of the ryot. He will use as hospital, school, or the like most of the unnecessary buildings which he keeps for his pleasure. If only the capitalist class will read the sign of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps which today pass muster as villages can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort. I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain. There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which not even the armed force that a powerful Government can bring into play can avert" (Y. I., 5. 12. 29).

But the question naturally arises, how far can voluntary effort actually achieve the desired results? What are the chief obstacles, and can they be overcome without wide-scale political conflicts?

Speaking about the obstacles on the path, Gandhi wrote in the *Young India* of 6. 2. 30, i. e. just on the eve of the Salt Satyagraha :

"The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from British rule, the interest of monied men, speculators, scrip holders, land-holders, factory owners and the like. All these do not always realise that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals whose tools and agents they are. If like the Japanese Samurai they could but realise that they must give up their blood-stained gains, the battle would be won for non-violence. It must not be difficult for them to see that the holding of millions is a crime when millions of their own kith and kin are starving and that therefore they must give up their agency. No principal has yet been found able to work without faithful agents.

"But non-violence has to be patient with these as with the British principals. The aim of the non-violent worker must ever be to convert. He may not however wait endlessly. When therefore the limit is reached, he takes risks and conceives plans of active Satyagraha which may mean civil disobedience and the like. His patience is never exhausted to the point of giving up his creed."

In his fight against any system, Gandhi has always drawn a line between the system itself and its agents. To the latter he has given ample opportunity to mend their ways and reduce themselves to poverty voluntarily. But when that does not work quickly enough, he has advised non-violent non-cooperation. That too has been for him a means of conversion. In the *Young India* of 26. 11. 31, he wrote :

"The masses do not today see in landlords and other profiteers their enemy. But the consciousness of the wrong done to them by these classes has to be created in them. I do not teach the masses to regard the capitalists as their enemies, but I teach them that they are their own enemies.

"The system must be destroyed and not the individual. The

Zemindar is merely a tool of a system. It is not necessary to take up a movement against them at the same time as against the British system. It is possible to distinguish between the two. But we had to tell the people not to pay to the Zemindars, because out of this money the Zemindars paid to the Government. But we have no quarrel with the Zemindars as such, so long as they act well by the tenants."

But we have seen already what he expects of a model Zemindar, namely that they may retain their post of moral leadership and surrender economic gains completely.

Speaking to an audience of Indian socialists in London, in 1931, Gandhi cleared this point still further.

"Q. How exactly do you think that Indian Princes, landlords, mill-owners and money-lenders and other profiteers are enriched ?

"A. At the present moment by exploiting the masses.

"Q. Can these classes be enriched without the exploitation of the Indian workers and peasants ?

"A. To a certain extent, yes.

"Q. Have these classes any social justification to live more comfortably than the ordinary worker and peasant who does the work which provides their wealth ?

"A. No justification. My idea of society is that while all are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc. ; therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilise their talents for this purpose. If they utilise their talents kindly they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees. It may be that

I would fail miserably in this. But that is what I am sailing for" (Y. I., 26. 11. 31).

"Q. How will you bring about the trusteeship? Is it by persuasion?

"A. Not merely by verbal persuasion. I will concentrate on my means. Some have called me the greatest revolutionary of my time. It may be false, but I believe myself to be a revolutionary—a non-violent revolutionary. My means are non-cooperation. No person can amass wealth without the co-operation, willing or forced, of the people concerned" (Y. I., 26. 11. 31).

Gandhi's intentions are thus clear. He wants the dissolution of capitalism, and he prefers the voluntary method. Where it fails, he employs the method of non-violent non-cooperation. He has often held that inequalities will remain till the end of time; but that has been a concession to human weakness.

"My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see, it is not to be realised. I therefore work for equitable distribution" (Y. I., 17.3.27).

His non-violence "rules out exploitation" altogether (*Harijan*, 21.5.33); i.e. in the non-violent civilization of his ideal, every one is a labourer.

This approaches the socialists' final ideal very closely, but there is a significant difference in emphasis. The question was asked him whether he would agree to State ownership of the means of production if the voluntary method failed. As long ago as 15.11.1928, he had written:

"According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that the world should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to



be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others."

It was not clear in the above passage whether the ownership was to be vested in a centralized State in which the interests of the masses were supreme, or whether the latter were to hold the means of production, in a decentralized form, through ownership vested in small village communities. So the questions proceeded.

"Q. Is love or non-violence compatible with possession or exploitation in any shape or form? If possession and non-violence cannot go together, then do you advocate the maintenance of private ownership of land and factories as an unavoidable evil which will continue so long as individuals are not ripe or educated enough to do without it? If it be such a step, would it not be better to own all the land through the State and place the State under the control of the masses?"

"A. Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically when there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession. Those who own money now, are asked to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.

"Q. If you say, private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put up with it?"

"A. That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money, but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of mankind.

"Q. Why then not have State-ownership in place of private property and thus minimize violence?"

"A. It is better than private ownership. But that too is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm

conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself, and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.

"Q. Let us come to a specific instance. Supposing an artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them, so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one man's folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense in which you would like to have him, do you not think the State would be justified in taking away those things from him with the minimum use of violence ?

"A. Yes, the State will, as a matter of fact, take away those things, and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees ; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny, and confiscation ordered where necessary—with or without compensation as the case demanded. What I would personally prefer would be not a centralisation of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship ; as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State-ownership" (*Modern Review*, October 1935, p. 412).

When we examine the above statement carefully, we notice that although Gandhi agrees with communists in so far as the ultimate ideal is concerned, he differs from them considerably in the emphasis which he lays upon voluntary effort as a means to

that end. It almost appears that he thinks that men live by reason alone and not by habit; and, moreover, that organizations of the character of the State are not necessary. He made it clear in the following passage that organizations were necessary, but they were to be of a voluntary character.

"Q. Then, Sir, shall we take it that the fundamental difference between you and the Socialists is, that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will; that being the reason why you strive for self-correction while they try to build up a system under which men will find it impossible to exercise their desire for exploiting others?

"A. While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the State has really lived for the poor. . . .

"Q. But have not those cases of trusteeship which you sometimes cite been due to your personal influence rather than to anything else? Teachers like you come infrequently. Would it not be better, therefore, to trust to some organization to effect the necessary changes in man, rather than depend upon the casual advent of men like yourself?

"A. Leaving me aside, you must remember that the influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teaching of each prophet like Mohammed, Buddha, or Jesus, there was a permanent portion and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. It is only because we try to keep up the permanent with the impermanent aspects of their teaching that there is so much distortion in religious practice today. But that apart, you can see that the

influence of these men has sustained after they have passed away. Moreover, what I disapprove of is an organization based on force which a State is. Voluntary organization there must be" (*Modern Review*, *ibid.*)

Lately, he has written in the *Harjan* of 16. 12. 39 :

"I am not ashamed to own that many capitalists are friendly towards me and do not fear me. They know that I desire to end capitalism almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced Socialist or even Communist. But our methods differ, our languages differ. My theory of 'trusteeship' is no makeshift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it. That possessors of wealth have not acted up to the theory does not prove its falsity, it proves the weakness of the wealthy. No other theory is compatible with non-violence. In the non-violent method the wrong-doer compasses his own end, if he does not undo the wrong. For, either through non-violent non-cooperation he is made to see the error, or he finds himself completely isolated."

We may now attempt to sum up Gandhi's views with regard to riches and rich men. Gandhi holds that the aim of human life is the acquisition of abiding happiness. Such happiness does not come through riches. But a minimum of wealth is necessary to serve as the basis of "high-thinking". The existing distress of mankind is due to the operation of selfishness which resides in every breast. In order to overcome that selfishness and to make the lives of *all* men happy, we should dedicate ourselves to service. It should, however, be intelligent service, designed to bring to us a fuller realization of the unity of all human beings. Such a dedicated life, with its consequent philosophical realization, can alone give us abiding happiness. And it has to be built upon the foundation of a voluntary restriction of wants.

Men should be persuaded to shed their selfishness through non-violent non-cooperation. The basic economic equality, or rather equitability, will be reached when all have turned labourers

and own the means of production jointly. The ownership should preferably be vested in voluntary organizations. But if that is not wholly possible, then it should be vested in the State to the necessary extent. The power of the State should be limited as far as possible. The object should be to preserve individual freedom, for real progress can only be built upon its foundation.

The individual will not however have the freedom to exploit. That will be kept in check by intelligent non-cooperation.

Where the rich do not dispossess themselves voluntarily, and where the poor are not sufficiently trained in non-violent non-cooperation to keep them in check, the State should step in and dispossess the rich to the necessary extent through the minimum exercise of violence.

This is how Gandhi and the socialists agree with each other with regard to their aim, but differ widely from one another with regard to the means.

---

## Gandhi on the State

In many respects, Gandhiji's *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*, which was published in 1908, still remains a remarkable book. Even about a year ago, he wrote that in order to understand his ideas correctly, it was necessary to read that small book "with his eyes".

In that book, there is a chapter in which a comparison has been made between Italy and India ( Ch. XV ); and there we find the fundamentals of his conception of Swaraj or independence.

"If you believe that, because Italians rule Italy, the Italian nation is happy, you are groping in darkness. Mazzini has shown conclusively that Italy did not become free. Victor Emanuel gave one meaning to the expression ; Mazzini gave another. According to Emanuel, Cavour and even Garibaldi, Italy meant the King of Italy and his henchmen. According to Mazzini, it meant the whole of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturists. Emanuel was only its servant. The Italy of Mazzini still remains in a state of slavery. The working classes in that land are still unhappy. They therefore indulge in assassination, rise in revolt, and rebellion on their part is always expected. What substantial gain did Italy obtain after the withdrawal of the Austrian troops ? The gain was only nominal. The condition of the people in general still remains the same. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, not that you want the reins of Government in your hands. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing : how can the millions obtain self-rule ? You will admit that people under several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English and, if you want such tyranny in India, then we shall

never agree. My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes, if only the English retire. If I have the power, I should resist the tyranny of Indian princes just as much as that of the English. By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them. If any Englishman dedicated his life to securing the freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land, I should welcome that Englishman as an Indian."

In trying to define the ideal of Swaraj, Gandhi wrote in Ch. XIV of the same book : "It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. Such Swaraj has to be experienced by each one for himself."

It is clear from the above passages that Gandhi wants a condition when all labouring people will feel that they are their own masters ; such a state alone is worthy of being called Swaraj. During the Non-Cooperation Movement, Gandhi objected to the use of violence, for he felt that even if India succeeded in driving out the English by violence, the condition of the masses would remain substantially unaltered. But if freedom came through non-violence, power would automatically come to the masses instead of to the classes. He wrote : "If it is steel that is to decide the issue, it must be not Sikh or Gurkha steel, it must be an all-India steel. If it is brute force that is to rule, then the millions of India must learn the art of war, or must for ever remain prostrate at the feet of him who wields the sword, whether he is *paradeshi* or *swadeshi*. The millions must remain 'dumb driven cattle'. Non-co-operation is an attempt to awaken the masses to a sense of their dignity and power. This can only be by enabling them to realise that they need not fear brute force" (Y. I., 1. 12. 20).

Emphasizing the fact that Swaraj was to be won both by and for the masses, he said : "The Swaraj of my dream recognises no race or religious distinction. Nor is to be the monopoly of a few rich persons nor yet of monied men. Swaraj is to be for all, including the former, but emphatically including the maimed,

the blind, the starving toiling millions" (Y. I., date ?) "It is the masses who have to attain Swaraj. It is neither the sole concern of the monied men nor that of the educated classes. Both must *subserve* their interest in any scheme of Swaraj" (Y. I., 20, 4. 21).

In the year 1925, there were several occasions when Gandhi further elucidated his ideas regarding Swaraj, and in each of them, we find a development of the root-ideas contained in his *Hind Swaraj* of 1908. With reference to the violent revolutionary method, he wrote : "I contend that the revolutionary method cannot succeed in India. If an open warfare were a possibility, I may concede that we may tread the path of violence that the other countries have and at least evolve the qualities that bravery on the battlefield brings forth. But the attainment of Swaraj through warfare I hold an impossibility for any time that we can foresee. Warfare may give us another rule for the English rule, but not self-rule in terms of the masses. The pilgrimage to Swaraj is a painful climb. It requires attention to details. It means vast organising ability, it means penetration into the villages solely for the service of the villagers. In other words it means national education, i. e. education of the masses. It means an awakening of national consciousness among the masses. It will not spring like the magician's mango. It will grow almost unperceived like the banian tree. A bloody revolution will never perform the trick" (Y. I., 21. 5. 25).

In the opinion of Gandhi, the condition of the masses in India as well as in Europe was substantially the same : "I feel that fundamentally the disease is the same in Europe as it is in India, in spite of the fact that in the former country, the people enjoy political self-government. No mere transference of political power in India will satisfy my ambition, even though I hold such transference to be a vital necessity of Indian national life. The people of Europe have no doubt political power but no Swaraj. Asian and African races are exploited for their partial benefit, and they, on their part, are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. At the root,



therefore, the disease appears to be the same as in India" (Y. I., 3. 9. 25).

In trying to clarify his concept of political independence, he wrote once more : "By Swaraj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed *by manual labour*<sup>1</sup> to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters. I hope to demonstrate that real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority" (Y. I., 29. 1. 25). This did not however mean that Gandhi had dropped his original ideal of anarchism. On one occasion during the same year, he maintained that : "Self-government means continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government or whether it is national. Swaraj government will be a sorry affair if people look up to it for the regulation of every detail of life" (Y. I., 6. 8. 25).

Summarising the views of 1925, it might be said that Gandhi still believed that in the Swaraj of his ideal, people would rule themselves in such a way that there would be no need of any State. But as that was far away, he worked for the establishment of a State in which the working classes would feel that they were masters of themselves ; at least, through their chosen representatives. The real power was to lie with the former. In short, the chief concern of the State was to be the interest of the toiling millions.

In the year 1924, Gandhi had already tried to convert the Congress into a voluntary labourers' association by suggesting that those who spun and paid their subscription in yarn, could alone be its members. But the proposal had been summarily turned down in the Congress. Commenting upon this, he had written : "Had it been workmen who had been the most influential

people and not capitalists or educated men and a property or an education test had been proposed, the powerful workmen would have ridiculed the suggestion and might have called it immoral" ( Y. I.; 27. 11. 24 ).

Some amount of further development must have taken place in Gandhiji's mind between the years 1924 and 1928 with regard to the economic functions of the State ; for we find him stating now that the control of the means of production should lie with the State rather than with profiteering individuals. Evidently this was due to the influence of socialistic thought. In answer to a question regarding machinery and its limitation, he had told an interviewer that he wanted the unavoidable heavy machinery to be either owned or controlled by the State. "Yes, but I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalised, or State controlled: They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive" (Y. I., 13. 11. 24).

Later on, in enunciating his economic ideal, he wrote : "According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that the world should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be ; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others" (Y. I., 15. 11. 28).

The year 1931, that is the year of the Salt Satyagraha, as well as the succeeding period, seems to have been an active one so far as the development of Gandhi's political ideas are concerned. Once more, he asserted his ultimate anarchistic ideal in the following terms : "To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to

regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state therefore there is no political power because there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realised in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is best which governs the least" (*Y. I.*, 2. 7. 31).

If we leave aside this anarchistic ideal and come down to practical issues, we find Gandhi, as before, envisaging a State in which the interest of the masses would occupy the supreme position. The State was not to serve the interests of both the classes as well as the masses, but of the masses alone. The interest of the former was to exist to the extent they were compatible with the interests of the latter. "I may tell you that the Congress does not belong to any particular group of men; it belongs to all, but the protection of the poor peasantry, which forms the bulk of the population, must be its primary interest. The Congress must, therefore, truly represent the poor. But that does not mean that all other classes—the middle classes, the capitalist or zemindar—must go under. All that it aims at is that all other classes must subserve the interest of the poor" (*Y. I.*, 16. 4. 31). Again, he said: "I will therefore state the purpose. It is complete freedom from the alien yoke in every sense of the term, and this for the sake of the dumb millions. Every interest, therefore, that is hostile to their interest, must be revised, or must subside if it is not capable of revision" (*Y. I.*, 17. 9. 31).

When logically pursued, this was obviously going to mean that in a free India, confiscation of property would have to be ordered to a large extent. Gandhi did not hesitate to say so at the Round Table Conference in London, with the result that both European and Indian rich men looked upon him as a veiled Bolshevik and the reaction against the Congress and its ideals had to a considerable extent.

He said : "I am afraid that for years to come India would be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the down-trodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher classes, and then, subsequently and scientifically, by the British rulers. If we are to lift these people from the mire, then it would be the bounden duty of the National Government of India in order to set its house in order, continually to give preference to these people and even free them from the burdens under which they are being crushed. And, if the landlords, zemindars, monied men and those who are today enjoying privileges—I do not care whether they are Europeans or Indians—if they find that they are discriminated against, I shall sympathise with them, but I will not be able to help them, even if I could possibly do so, because I would seek their assistance in that process, and without their assistance it would not be possible to raise these people out of the mire.

"Look at the condition, if you will, of the untouchables, if the law comes to their assistance and sets apart miles of territory. At the present moment they hold no land; they are absolutely living at the mercy of the so-called higher castes, and also, let me say, at the mercy of the State. They can be removed from one quarter to another without complaint and without being able to seek the assistance of law. Well, the first act of the Legislature will then be to see that in order somewhat to equalise conditions, these people are given grants freely.

"From whose pockets are those grants to come? Not from the pockets of Heaven. Heaven is not going to drop money for the sake of the State. They will naturally come from the monied classes, including the Europeans.

"It will be, therefore, a battle between the haves and have-nots : and if that is what is feared, I am afraid the National Government will not be able to come into being if all the classes hold the pistol at the head of the dumb millions and say : You shall not have a government of your own unless you guarantee our possessions and our rights" (N. T., p. 71).

In an interview given in 1934, Gandhi practically repeated the same view with regard to the State, namely, that it should confiscate property if and when it is established that it is not being used by the rich for the welfare of the masses. He said that State-ownership was better than private ownership; but at the same time he emphasized the fact that the voluntary method of equalization was better than the process of equalization brought about by the arm of the State. The power of the State should be decentralized to the utmost possible extent; of course, consistent with the welfare of the masses.<sup>1</sup>

On another occasion in the following year, while speaking about machinery, Gandhi repeated how he wished that the unavoidable heavy machinery needed by a nation, should be held in common for the sake of the masses. This was to be done by the State; but, more preferably, by small village communities, which would function largely like autonomous units within the State. This would be nearer his ideal of Anarchism.

*Q.* But what about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?

*A.* Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures....

"I would prize every invention science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphixiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour, has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people" (*H.*, 22. 6. 35).

Summarising Gandhi's views on the State, we thus find that as a philosophical anarchist, he would have as little to do with it in human affairs as possible. He envisages an ideal condition when enlightened men would not need State-made laws to

keep them on the right path. But as such a condition is humanly impossible of attainment at any point of time, we shall have to put up with a State to a more or less extent.

In that State, Gandhi would wish to see the interest of the toiling millions as its supreme concern. In fact, he would wish all men—except, of course, children and the aged and the sick—to turn themselves voluntarily into manual labourers.<sup>1</sup> Others may exist on sufferance, but only so long as their interest does not clash with the interest of the masses.

Such a State would confiscate property if necessary, as well as hold, or be in control of the means of production on behalf of the masses. Gandhi would prefer this control or ownership to lie with smaller, decentralized units. Where it is unavoidable, it should lie with the State. But whether the possession lies with the State or its decentralized, more or less autonomous, units, it must always be run for the common benefit of labouring humanity, never for the sake of private gain, nor for that of one particular section of humanity, marked off from the rest by racial or religious considerations.

Gandhi believes that such a State can only be established by awakening the labouring classes into a sense of their power and dignity. This can only be achieved through non-violent non-cooperation and its corollary activities. Any other method may bring political power within the grasp of some party, but the masses will remain under the thumb of that party. Such a condition is not Swaraj or self-rule for the masses. For if the party be wrong, and the masses are in a state of fear of violence, then who will check and guide the former?

Thus Gandhi's conception of the State is neither completely like that of the Anarchists nor of the Communists. It approaches the former with regard to its aim of political and economic decentralization, and that of the latter in that the

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. His letters from jail to the members of the Sabarmati Ashram in 1930, published under the title *From Yeravda Mandir*, 2nd ed. 1935; specially the chapters entitled Bread-Labour, Non-possession and Non-stealing.

interest of the toiling millions will have a dictatorial position within the State.

The originality of Gandhi's ideas is further enhanced by the fact that he suggests a means of non-violent non-cooperation through which power to control the State will come, not to any party working on behalf of the toiling millions but to them directly. Non-violent non-cooperation can be successful only when the soldiers of non-violence learn to take the initiative into their own hands even when they find themselves alone, and if they are prepared to lay down their lives without bitterness for an order in which there is no exploitation and no inequality,<sup>1</sup> i.e. in a state where the idea of the essential unity of human interest prevails.

How far Gandhiji's plans and ideas are capable of practical realization, only the future can say.

-----

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also....."

"Discipline has a place in non-violent strategy, but much more is required. In Satyagraha army everybody is a soldier and a servant. But at a pinch every soldier has also to be his own general and leader. Mere discipline is not enough. It must be backed by leadership. The latter calls for faith and vision" (H., 28.7.40).

## Gandhi's Contribution to Indian Social Ideals

The ideal of ancient Hindu social organization, as of all other organizations, was to make men happy. Happiness depends partly upon the satisfaction of the human desires of hunger and sex, and partly upon other things. At no point of time can we envisage a condition when every wish of all men will be satisfied. Disease and death are inevitable. So nature herself sets certain limitations on the satisfaction of all desires. Full happiness cannot come that way. It may come in part if we satisfy our needs by depending upon our own labours and upon the free and willing co-operation of others, if such dependence does not involve any injury to other human beings. But as for the rest of our unsatisfied desires, we have to fortify ourselves in such a manner that we shall not be upset if they are not satisfied ; and should be able to preserve our equanimity without, at the same time, degenerating into apathy and mental indolence. We should train our mind in such a way that we shall be able to derive joy from the fullness of knowledge and love and not from the satisfaction of desires. In other words, we have to build up an ideal philosophical attitude on the foundation of a basic minimum satisfaction of human needs.

An economic and social system was build up in ancient India on the basis of hereditary gilds. Equality of income or of opportunity was not envisaged as a necessary ideal ; but in order to counteract the possibility of an extreme accentuation of differences in wealth, a certain ideal was both extensively and intensively propagated. Those who spent their wealth in social welfare instead of personal enjoyment were praised, and those who gave up all their wealth were praised very much. More honour was thus shown to those who renounced than to those who possessed. Men of knowledge were respected more than men of wealth, and thus a scheme was set up to minimize the evils of



differences in wealth. The system of production also was such that it did not allow extremes of wealth to grow.

The State was not a very powerful organization. It did not try to smooth down differences in wealth through legal coercion. That was done, as stated above, by setting up a particular set of values and by the creation of a strong and active public opinion in support of it. It might be argued that it is better to bring about equality through law than by depending upon voluntary effort for that purpose, law being much more efficient in that respect. But then law acts through violence, and the Satyagrahi may argue that there is little merit in equality brought about by violence. It does not stay, and requires a permanent violent structure to maintain equalization. He might therefore say in defence of the voluntary method that it is intrinsically more moral and therefore a truer and surer means than the other one. If inequalities grow, as they always tend to do, there must of course, be some means of checking their growth. But such means should be of non-violent no-cooperation exercised by those who wish to challenge such inequalities, rather than of the violent arm of the State.

In any case, in ancient India, a plan was thus devised for minimizing the evils of inequality of wealth.

Hindu society was formed of many tribes and many castes. They had a variety of religions and ceremonies and of social customs. The Vedanta philosophy teaches that all things, all social facts and processes, are conditional. If we take our stand upon that philosophy and try to order our lives accordingly, a completely human way of life can be built up in which we shall not be attached to any particular form or code which has been created under the stress of a particular set of circumstances. This is cultural freedom. And that philosophy also gives us an inward freedom by breaking our attachment to time and place, and self which is an embodiment of time and place.

Ancient Hindu idealists believed that every cultural path, if properly directed, ultimately leads to the Vedantic position. They did not, therefore, uproot the social culture of the subjugated

tribes but tried to raise them to this final philosophical position. Thus a perfectly democratic attitude was held with respect to different types of human culture.

We find something like this among the Russians today in relation to the cultures of the Tatars and Uzbeks. The place of the Vedanta is taken there by Science and the scientific way of life.<sup>1</sup>

There is, however, a little difference. A Vedantist thinks that all cultures are on the road to Vedanta, and therefore tribal cultures have to be elevated until they attain the completeness and large-heartedness of the Vedanta. The social scientist in Russia does not, however, exercise this attitude with respect to the cultures of the Tatars or the Uzbeks. He does no violence to those cultures, but he has no respect for them either. He wishes to replace tribal cultures by the scientific one. He believes that a time will come when all men will outgrow the necessity of less-developed cultures. The Vedantist, on the other hand, believes in the permanent necessity of a variety of human cultures in accordance with varying human needs. He would refrain from saying one is better than the other, for both satisfy human needs under different conditions. This is a pantheistic form of social idealism.

These then were the ideals ; and let us now see how those ideals actually worked themselves in practice.

At its inception, and during its formative period, the ideal was applied to a population which was composed of warring peoples : the Brahminical peoples, some of whom had originated the ideals, and the more ancient tribes and peoples of India. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Ancient India did not allow men any freedom in the choice of occupations while assuring them perfect security through monopoly guaranteed by custom and the State's authority which protected that custom. Russia too offers protection from unemployment to its subjects. But there is a big difference in the fact that in Russia all economic planning is done by the State, while in ancient India there was no such conscious planning. People were supposed to follow the trade of their fathers, a trade into which they had drifted through local necessity in the past. Moreover, in Russia membership to trade-gilds is by choice, while in ancient India it was by birth.

existence of the hostility was a historical fact, and that was the reason why the ideal of *Varnadharma* was degraded, in actual practice, into the caste-system. Caste is a mean struck between *Varnadharma* on the one hand, and dominant human nature on the other. In that system, the conquerors tried to shift all the burden of labour upon the subjugated people, and also did not accord to some of the newly absorbed tribes absolute equality of status even when they were admitted into the scheme of *Varnas*. The case of the Maga Brahmanas and of some Kshatriyas and of different grades of Sudras is a case in point.

At a later stage in history, we see India rolling in wealth. This was another historical situation ; and the ideal initiated formerly, though in an incomplete manner, now suffered from a further hindrance in the way of its complete realization. Those who renounced and did not enjoy were now looked upon as cranks, to be pitied. Men of intellect sold their soul to the rich, temples became storehouses of wealth instead of storehouses of learning and character.

This period of history led to a weakening of the ideal of *Dharma*. Pride led to exclusiveness, and the conquered tribes were now bundled bag and baggage into the last *Varna*, and none of them admitted into the higher ones.

Then came a period of conquest by Mussulman tribes of Afghanistan and Central Asia. Hindu Society was now on the defensive, and the ideal of *Varna* suffered still more ; while the caste system grew, more and more hide-bound and rigidly, though formally, puritanic. Instead of uniting all the peoples of the world into a brotherhood of *Varnas*, it now made them more and more exclusive, even when they were living side by side.

These are historical facts. At all stages of its history, the ideal had to be applied to human material, and the human material was under different conditions at different periods of time. The ideal was therefore never capable of being fully embodied in social form. Perhaps that has been the fate of all ideals where large masses of mankind have been concerned.

Today democracy tries to establish itself by denying democracy, by shooting down those who differ.

Thus the Indian ideal became tarnished. It was also poor in one respect from the very beginning. There was some idea of economic equitability, but none of equality of income or of opportunity. Here Gandhi has added his contribution to the ancient ideal of *Varnadharma*. As a faithful disciple of Tolstoy and Ruskin, he believes that no man should live upon the toils of another. Therefore all should live by manual labour. He has accepted the ideal of *Varna*, which says that the most desirable organization is that which functions in such a manner that every man can find in it the opportunity to serve the cause of humanity best by exercising the special talents with which he is endowed by nature.<sup>1</sup> But he has added to it the law that no man shall be free from the duty of bread labour. It is a law "common to all the varnas." (*Y. M.*, p. 52).

"If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease, and no such misery as we see around. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.

"May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. *Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's* perhaps applies here well.

"Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour, is for the soul and is its own satisfaction, it should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers, and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the law of bread-labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of

---

<sup>1</sup> He has also rejected, though not fully, the belief in the hereditary transmissibility of character which formed a part of the law of *Varna* in ancient times. Of this Gandhi is not very sure.

society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service.

"This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is, the law of our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal" (*H.*, 29. 6. 35).

This will, according to him, bring about a state of economic and social equality which is as much necessary for human progress as freedom is.

Equality of income is only another way in which love can find expression. Love does not merely express itself by allowing all men to develop along their specific personal channels of life—which is *Svadharna*, the foundation of *Varnadharna*—but also by offering to each an equality of opportunity through equality of income.

And this idea, Gandhi has brought to India from the West.

---

## The Nature of Gandhi's Idealism

In order to understand the nature of Gandhiji's idealism, it is necessary to contrast it with that of the Socialists ; and for this purpose we cannot do better than state the latter in the words of Lenin himself. In his book *The State and Revolution*, there occur the following passages :

1. "The substitution of a proletarian for the capitalist State is impossible without a violent revolution, while abolition of the proletarian State, that is, of all States, is only possible through 'withering away' (Ch. I).

2. "We are not utopians, we do not indulge in 'dreams' of how best to do away *immediately* with all management, with all subordination ; these are anarchist dreams based upon a want of understanding of the task of a proletarian dictatorship. They are foreign in their essence to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, they serve but to put off the Socialist revolution 'until human nature is different.' 'No, we want the Socialist revolution with human nature as it is now ; human nature itself cannot do without subordination, without control, without managers and clerks' (Ch. III).

3. 'But this 'factory' discipline, which the proletariat will extend to the whole of society on the defeat of capitalism and the overthrow of the exploiters, is by no means our ideal, and is far from our final aim. It is but a foothold as we press on to the radical cleansing of society from all the brutality and foulness of capitalist exploitation : we leave it behind as we move on .....When all have learnt to manage, and really do manage, socialised production, when all really do keep account and control of the idlers, gentlefolk, swindlers and such like 'guardians of capitalist traditions', the escape from such general registration and control will inevitably become so increasingly difficult, so much the exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are very practical people, not sentimental intellectuals, and they will

scarcely allow any one to trifle with them), that very soon the *necessity* of observing the simple fundamental rules of any kind of social life will become a habit. The door will then be wide open for a transition from the first phase of communist society to its second higher phase, and along with it to the complete withering away of the State" (Ch. V).

4. "People will *grow accustomed* to observing the elementary conditions of social existence *without force and without subjection*.

"In order to emphasise this element of habit, Engels speaks of a new generation, 'brought up under new and free social conditions which will prove capable of throwing on the dust heap all the useless old rubbish of State organisation'" (Ch. IV).

Summarising the principles involved in the above statements, we find :

(a) The Socialist ideal is a condition when men work for one another, i.e., for human society, not under compulsion of State laws but of their own accord. The State is unnecessary in the last resort.

(b) Men live more by habit than by will. So to bring about that change, it is necessary to alter present *habits*, and that has to be done by force.

(c) In order to have the power to do so, the proletariat has to capture the present State authority by violence, and then use the same violence in order to shape habits anew.

(d) After the habits have been altered, the State will have to disappear through a process of 'withering away', not by any violent revolution.

This is the Socialist method stated in the simplest terms possible, and, we hope, we have done no injustice to it.

This means that Lenin, at least, took human nature *as it is*, and tried to build his plans of revolution as well as of future reconstruction with that as its foundation. But Gandhi builds upon a different foundation. It is not in the existing passive character of man that his hope lies but in the *possibility of evoking the latent active character* of every human being that he

rests his hopes of revolution and of social reconstruction. That man changes and can change for the better, not individually alone, but also in masses, is as much true of him as the fact that he is selfish and blind today, and loves more to be ordered about than to take the responsibility of self-direction.

This seems to me to be the fundamental difference between the way Lenin and Gandhi have approached and also handled human nature. But Gandhi is no utopian dreamer. There are specific reasons why he has rejected the Socialist means of revolution and sticks to the non-violent methods instead. His idealism bears a different character ; and this is what we shall try to explain in the present paper.

He himself has stated his fundamental difference with the Socialists in the following report of an interview published in *The Modern Review*, October 1935.

*Question.* "Shall we take it that the fundamental difference between you and the socialists is that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will ; that being the reason why you strive for self-correction while they try to build up a system under which men will find it impossible to exercise their desire for exploiting others ?"

*Answer.* "While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress."

This is a most important statement and marks off clearly the parting of ways between Gandhi and the Socialists, although both agree in their ultimate aim of liberating mankind from all forms of exploitation. Thus Gandhi is an idealist in spite of recognizing the fact that most men live by habit today. Why does he stick to the idealist position and not try to create a Swaraj in India



based upon habit and not will as Lenin did in Russia? Hostile critics say that he is afraid of revolution; less informed people say that he does not want the eradication of exploitation. Both these charges are not correct. What appears, however, to be the real reason is that Gandhi does not attach much importance to the form which society will outwardly take, provided there is love for humanity burning brighter and brighter within our heart. The outward social form will take its own course, we must take care of the central thing. If we set one corner of the square right, the others will right themselves as a matter of course. His chief concern, therefore, seems to be how to keep the flame of human love burning, how to keep the sense of human unity unbroken even in the midst of the revolution. Non-violent non-cooperation or Satyagraha is for him a way of revolution based upon the sense of human brotherhood. Like a knight of olden days, he jealously guards that treasure and is prepared never to betray the sacred charge even in the darkest hour.

Let us now explain in Gandhi's own terms the character of his idealism in the religious, political and economic spheres one by one.

"The virtue of an ideal consists in its boundlessness. But although religious ideals must thus from their nature remain unattainable by imperfect human beings, although by virtue of their boundlessness, they may seem ever to recede farther and farther away from us, the nearer we go to them, still they are closer to us than our very hands and feet because we are more certain of their reality and truth than even our own physical being. This faith in one's ideals constitutes true life, in fact it is man's all in all" (Y. I., 22. 11. 28).

"The goal ever recedes from us. The greater the progress, the greater the recognition of our unworthiness. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory" (Y. I., 9.3.22).

"It seems that the attempt made to win *Swaraj* is *Swaraj* itself. The faster we run towards it the longer seems to be the

distance to be traversed. The same is the case with all ideals" (Y. I., January 1922).

This is true not only of his idealism in the religious sphere but in the political and economic spheres as well. Gandhi knows that in actual practice, we attain the mean set between the ideal on the one hand, and the limitations set by existing human nature on the other. The former is fixed in character (as for example, the desire to free the world from all exploitation of the Socialists), while the latter is a variable factor ; so the mean struck today cannot be the same as the mean struck tomorrow. Tomorrow our capacity to suffer, our perseverance, our courage, may increase and we may approach nearer our ideal than today. So instead of putting too much emphasis upon the *attainable middle-ideal*, Gandhi rather believes that we should always keep before our mind's eye, the *highest* goal, and, at the same time, concentrate upon the means of giving it a shape under existing conditions. The attainable ideal will vary from time to time ; but if we always concentrate on the means and not on the fruits thereof, we shall succeed in bringing heaven down to earth in a much better fashion than by any other means.

This appears to be the chief distinction between Gandhi and, say, Jawaharlal, who believes in a clear statement of the attainable middle-ideal as a necessary condition in the fight for freedom. It is necessary, according to Jawaharlal, in order to bring hope to the people, to inspire them to fight. An unattainable ideal, he would say, leaves people in a sick frame of mind when they go on distressing over their own weakness. But Gandhi thinks otherwise. Therefore he wrote to Jawaharlal in 1933 :

"Though you have emphasised the necessity of a clear statement of the goal, having once determined it, I have never attached importance to its repetition. The clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there, if we do not know and utilize the means of achieving it. I have, therefore, concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. I know if we can take care of them the attainment of the goal is assured. I feel

too that our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means.

"The method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced that it is the shortest" (*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 17.9.33).

"I have not dealt with the questions of the ideal constitution as you alone can be its fashioners. My duty lies in discovering and employing means by which the nation may evolve the strength to enforce its will. When once the nation is conscious of its strength it will find its own way or make it" (*Y. I.*, 8. 1. 25).

"Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state therefore there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realised in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is best which governs the least" (*Y. I.*, 2. 7. 31).

This with regard to political affairs. In the economic sphere, too, he bears the same character in his ideals. His realism is not blind to the failings of human nature; but he sticks to it because he believes that this is the way of highest attainment. "If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all....

"This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is the law of our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal.

"If we did so, our wants would be minimized, our food would be simple. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let any one who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread, he will derive the greatest relief from the

productions of his labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took were superfluous.

"May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. *Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's* perhaps applies here well" (H., 29. 6. 35).

In an interview given in 1934, Gandhiji perhaps made the position of his economic and political idealism clearer than anywhere else.

*Question.* "Is love or non-violence compatible with possession or exploitation in any shape or form? If possession and non-violence cannot go together then do you advocate the maintenance of private ownership of land and factories as an unavoidable evil which will continue so long as individuals are not ripe or educated enough to do without it? If it be such a step, would it not be better to own all the land through the State and place the State under the control of the masses?"

*Answer.* "Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically, when there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession.

"Those who own money now, are asked to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method" (*The Modern Review*, October 1935).

He has clearly stated: "To degrade or cheapen an ideal for our convenience is to practise untruth and to lower our selves. To understand an ideal and then to make a Herculean effort to reach it, no matter how difficult it is, that is *paramartha*, manly endeavour" (M. M., p. 25).

"Having ascertained the law of our being, we must set

about reducing it to practice to the extent of our capacity and no further. That is the middle way" (*Y. I.*, 5. 2. 25).

"No man is expected to do more than he can" (*H.* 24. 9. 38).

This does not however mean that he fondly cherishes any false hopes regarding human nature :

"It is true that I have often been let down. Many have deceived me and many have been found wanting. But I do not repent of my association with them. For I know how to non-co-operate, as I know how to co-operate. The most practical, the most dignified way of going on in the world is to take people at their word, when you have no positive reason to the contrary" (*Y. I.*, 26. 12. 24).

This shows why he clings to the highest ideal even when he recognises fully the limitations of human nature. His idealism is like the determined idealism of one who was like a cynic in his estimation of human nature, but who has succeeded in conquering back his faith in humanity. It is not the faith of an idle dreamer who knows nothing of the world ; he holds on to the highest ideal because he believes this is the way of highest attainment. That is why we agree with his remarkable statement made as early as 1920 :

"I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist" (*Y. I.*, 11. 8. 20).

---

## The Quintessence of Gandhism

The foundation of Mahatma Gandhi's life is formed by his firm faith in God. God is the Universal Being which encompasses everything and of which humanity is one small part. He is the law working behind the universe, for the Law and the Lawmaker are finally one and the same. Human life has been given to us so that we may realize the working of that Law and then set our lives in accordance with it. From personal experience Gandhi has come to the conclusion that it is the law of love, and not struggle and competition, which holds together the universe ; and so he tries to set every act of his life in conformity with love and a sense of human unity.

But blind love, either of God or of man, is of no avail. It is only when love gives us a fuller understanding of the universe that it becomes precious and worth striving for. In Gandhi's own case, this realization comes best through loving struggle to free mankind from all forms of oppression and not chiefly through meditation or contemplation. But he readily admits that for others, the path may be different. There are many paths to the same Universal Truth, and he feels happy if every one of us follows his own light and never lays down the burden which he has been appointed to carry.

But whatever may be the particular path which one chooses, one thing is certain, namely, that the chief obstacle to realization comes ultimately from our own personal selves. Laziness, selfishness and the pride that we have known the whole truth are the three greatest obstacles in our path. Our lives should therefore be an unceasing effort for self-purification ; our activity should be as uninterrupted as that of the "drop of water in the ocean". And if such be the will of God, this tireless pursuit of Truth and consequent self-purification, may eventually bring about a happier state of life for mankind on earth. It is in the realization of Truth alone that we can find the source of abiding happiness.

This forms the core of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and whatever he does or preaches springs ultimately from this fundamental attitude towards life. The use of Satyagraha as a political weapon is only the above law of individual spiritual life projected into the sphere of mass-action. Satyagraha is, for Mahatma Gandhi, the same discipline for realizing the truth of human unity as the individual's personal life might be ; while Swaraj is synonymous with the undefined, yet limitless, term *moksha* or emancipation.

The above ideas of Mahatma Gandhi do not, however, constitute the whole of his philosophical equipment. He has certain personal likes and dislikes or *samskaras*, derived either from his life's experiences or from the masters whom he reveres, and it is through the medium of these *samskaras* that his universal ideas express themselves, and sometimes even suffer a little distortion. Of such ideas we can readily think of two, one of which he has apparently derived from Hinduism and the other from Christianity. His predilection for forms or institutions which have endured through ages, in other words, the recognition of permanency as a quality of Truth, has obviously been derived from his traditional Hindu environment. This has led him into a form of conservatism, which has, however, the redeeming feature that it is subjected to the final tests of reason and morality. In spite of that, Gandhi has a strain of conservatism at the back of his mind, which under certain circumstances, obscures from his view a further character of truth, namely, its ever-changing and conditional quality, through whose manifestations it is difficult to trace any feature of permanency except perhaps that of being or of continuity. In any case, it makes Gandhi constitutionally more receptive of old ideas than of new ones. Perhaps his vision in this direction is further limited by the exigencies of Action. The other *samskara* which has probably been due to his intimate Christian association, is his concept of sin and a special attitude with respect to purity and sexual morality, which has been compared by several observers with that of the mediaeval Christian saints. Such *samskaras*, whether we

like them or not, should all be allowed for or ruled out when we try to estimate Gandhi's real greatness which lies in the magnitude of his *realized* universal truths.

A further study of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas also reveals the strong influence exerted upon him by Ruskin and Tolstoy. That gives a meaning to his hatred of industrialism and all forms of centralized control. In essence, it means a final reliance upon freedom as the prime condition of human growth. With Tolstoy and Ruskin, Gandhi also believes that the root of of the present distress lies in man's selfishness and in his predatory habit of living upon the toils of others. Most men are apt to forget that all mankind is ultimately one, and that all must either rise or fall together. They usurp power for their own sake or for the sake of their class, and thus bring into being much misery which could otherwise have been avoided. It is in the diagnosis of present day ills that he agrees most closely with the authors named above. And he also agrees with them in holding that selfishness can only be overcome by unselfishness, hatred by love and immorality by morality and by nothing else. Gandhi also considers with Tolstoy that the "law of bread-labour" is the first moral law of life. According to this law, ~~every~~ man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, in some labour connected with agriculture or its allied industries. Machines have their place in human economy, but they should only be employed to lighten human labour and for no other purpose.

This leads us on to a comparison of Mahatma Gandhi's ideas with Socialism and Communism. Gandhi believes with Socialists and Communists that the ideal is equal distribution ; but finding that impossible of attainment, he strives for equitability rather than for mathematical equality. Here we must, however, remember that Gandhi's activities are directed not towards the establishment of any particular social or economic order, but towards the purification of the means of revolution in conformity with the spirit of love and of human unity. He has only one thing to say with regard to the final state. In it every



individual must find the freedom and opportunity of exercising his special talents and abilities in the best interests of humanity, according to his own light. On his own side, too, the individual must be prepared to be neglected and to suffer if his views do not agree with those of society, i.e. he must pay the price for the freedom he enjoys. With that solitary reservation on behalf of human freedom, Gandhi is prepared to leave the actual task of social or constitutional re-organization to future generations of men, while he would prefer to reserve for himself the duty of attuning the means of revolution to the supreme law of love and truth.

Consistent with that law, there can be only one form of revolution; and it is here that he departs farthest from the established schools of Socialism and Communism. According to Gandhi, the only moral form of revolution is non-violent non-cooperation. The institutions of the present world, based on exploitation as they are, continue to exist because both the exploiters and the exploited cooperate in their maintenance. If both could be inspired to dissociate themselves from the existing system—the one by shedding selfishness and the other fear—then the present order would go to pieces in a moment. But human nature refuses to yield so easily. It yields only to constant effort and only when that effort is inspired by an abiding trust in the potential goodness of human nature. The appeal to man works best through the heart and not the head. If a band of non-cooperators suffers in the process of non-cooperation, but does not retaliate, then the heart of the exploiters is bound to be touched by the suffering, and a way is sure to be opened for human reconciliation and a new social synthesis. But during the whole of that non-cooperation, the heart of the resisters must ever remain bright with the spirit of love and of human unity, and their hand must be held back by an infinitude of patience. It is only such love that can work miracles.

This means that Gandhi relies more upon Will than on Habit in the correction of human wrongs. While conceding that man actually lives more by habit than by will, he maintains

that it is better that it should be otherwise. This process may seem a long and arduous one, but Gandhi is sure that it is the shortest, because it is also the surest. It is only on the foundation of intelligent and ceaseless endeavour that the edifice of social equality and of human happiness can be securely reared. Happiness which comes through habit, through the enforcement of a particular social order from above, however perfect in architectural form it may be, is bound to fail in the long run. For it does not eradicate the root of the evil which lies within. That evil cannot be overcome by violence, but by ceaseless efforts of self-purification.

In the last analysis, therefore, Gandhi hardly holds out any hope for mankind, none whatsoever in a historical destiny. He asks us to rely upon God and exercise our energy and our love to the utmost. He shows us a supremely moral way of revolution, which may, through the grace of God, bring about a condition of equality and of happiness on earth. It is in the perfection of this means of revolution that Gandhi's chief contribution to humanity lies. Perhaps the means are old, as he himself would prefer to say; but it is he who has first of all rescued it from the world's private armoury and fashioned out of it a first-class instrument of wide political application.

---

## Gandhi and Lenin

In the midst of the gloom which encircles mankind on all sides, there are always men who struggle with the surrounding darkness and succeed in saving their souls from its oppressive influence. Of such men in the present age, we can think of two who bear the marks of having successfully fought that battle and whose lives bear testimony to the enormity of the suffering through which they have had to pass. Lenin and Gandhi. Both these men resemble one another in their relentless pursuit of Truth as well as in their great passion for the poor and the oppressed. Yet, in the matter of their inner convictions and attitudes, they stand widely apart from one another.

According to both Lenin and Gandhi, the world's suffering is today caused by the existence of an unjust social system which allows one class of men to live upon the toils of another. The system not only blights the lives of those who are exploited, but also degrades those who live by that act of exploitation. The system has therefore to be broken down if we want to make men happy; in this both Gandhi and Lenin agree. But it is in regard to their methods, ~~as~~ as well as the mental attitudes which they bring to bear upon their task that the two men seem to challenge one another.

Lenin believed that the unjust social and economic system of today exists because it is the exploiters who hold the power of the State in their hands. If once that power came within the grasp of the exploited working classes, they would so build society anew as to make a repetition of the wrongs impossible. All his efforts were therefore directed to securing such revolution as would bring the State under the dictatorship of the proletariat, which would then exercise its powers to remodel man's outlook as well as to make it impossible for any man to deprive others of the fruits of their labour.

Gandhi holds quite a different view. In theory, he is radically opposed to the centralization involved in Lenin's scheme.

He believes that such centralization is always dangerous because it will crush individuality, which alone lies at the root of all progress. The State, by its very nature, is based upon violence. So he would have as little to do with it as possible. As a matter of fact, Gandhi does not believe that the core of the problem lies in the authority of the State, nor that the evil lies wholly with those who hold that authority. He finds that the State can exercise its power and abuse it, only because men are afraid of violence all the time. The governors are selfish, cruel and violent, while the governed are timid and afraid of losing their comforts and material possessions in defence of their rights. The root of the evil thus lies ultimately in the character of the individual. The rights of man can only be won and maintained if we rid ourselves of these weaknesses, i.e. if we go through a process of self-purification. In other words, we can enjoy those rights only if we cast aside all fear of violence from our hearts, and also if we labour with our own hands for the production of our daily bread and do not depend upon the labour of others. These two are the fundamental duties which we must perform before we can enjoy the right of living a free and happy life ; and conversely, it is the absence of these two which makes it possible for injustice to perpetuate itself.

All of Gandhi's efforts are therefore directed towards making us realize the supreme duty of labouring with our own hands and of casting away the fear of violence from our hearts : violence to our person as well as to our possessions. And he proposes to do so by a system of constructive work on the one hand, and of progressive non-violent non-cooperation on the other. Gandhi believes that although such a revolution appears to be a slow process, yet in the end, it is the quickest one as it is also the surest. In the very act of breaking down the present order, the masses evolve the necessary strength for self-rule, while all the class-interests which oppose them are automatically rooted out or sterilized during the operation.

The difference in method between Lenin and Gandhi really lies in a fundamental difference in their respective faiths.

For, though practical, both of them were essentially men of faith. Lenin held that man is a creature of circumstance ; so that if he is to be made moral, he should be placed under such conditions that morality and self-sacrifice are stamped upon him through the environment ; while an exercise of selfishness is, at the same time, rendered impossible. His efforts were, therefore, mainly directed towards the building up of an architectural system under which man would develop the habit of living a just and moral life. But Gandhi seems to have less faith than Lenin in such morality evoked by circumstance. For him, such morality is untrue and therefore impermanent. He believes that Man is the master of Form and not Form that of Man. Permanent changes can only come from within, and our principal object should therefore be to help the individual to grow more moral and more heroic from within. Any change in social form must only be an expression and a measure of man's inward progress.

Gandhi is characteristically Indian and individualistic in this respect. All his plans of social and political reform are so designed that men can work them either in company or alone ; and more perfectly when alone than otherwise. We may characterize the difference between Lenin and Gandhi by saying that the former builds his hope upon man as he actually is in the large majority, while the latter upon what it is possible or what it is desirable for him to be. Gandhi admits that man lives more by habit than by will ; but he holds that it is better for him, and also possible for him, to live by the exercise of the will. But whether it is wiser in the end to rely more upon possibility than upon actuality is more than one can say.

\*

\*

\*

\*

Lenin was like a mighty warrior who held aloft a great hope for mankind, while his soul was steeped in the dream of a millenium when no man would live in idleness and all would live in love and employ their talents to serve humanity. With a strong taste for reality, he turned to History for a sanction of the hope which was swelling up in his bosom, and there he discovered the finger of Fate pointing towards such fulfilment as he

wished for mankind. It is because of the fatalistic nature of his belief that Lenin could employ the most ruthless means of destruction to overcome the obstacles which came in his way. The path may lie today, so he thought, through violence and hatred, but the day would surely come when it will be time to lay down the sword or perhaps melt it for building the plough, for then man will have no reason to hate man. But until that day arrives, our path must lie through violence and bloodshed, for that is the inevitable law of history. Lenin was like a workman, passionately hammering away at the anvil at night, in the glow of the lamp which incessantly burned before him, while he was oblivious of the dark sky which hung over his head. And in that sky, the cold stars shone with a glitter which knew no compassion for the love or the hate which burned within the bosom of the workman.

But Gandhi, the pilgrim soul, is ceaselessly on the march in a journey which is without end. With the staff of the pilgrim in his hand, he travels towards a distant light which draws him inexorably towards itself. Hope burns within him and he yields to its impulse, for there is nothing else for him to do. In the inner depth of his being, he knows it is not his business to ask if ever the millennium will come or not. All that he is called upon to do, at the present moment, is to submit to the forces of his purified nature and thus fulfil the task for which he was appointed by God. It is his ideal "to become like the clay in the Potter's divine hand." And this is also the reason why he says in true humility that his task is the "service of God and therefore of humanity."

Gandhi believes that God never admits us into the design of the future. He has given us no control over the end, and only a limited one over the means ; which means is love. And Gandhi claims that he has discovered the secret whereby love can be used to transform one's environment, and free human life from the oppression which is weighing upon it. The secret is to love the oppressors of mankind as oneself, even while we are opposing them by militant non-cooperation in order to wreck the system

by which they stand. It is a terribly difficult task to which he invites us, to oppose a tyrant while bearing no malice against him in our hearts. But as this is also the noblest path, Gandhi asks us to spare no pains in following it perfectly. All his genius is exercised in discovering this path of love in the midst of worldly conflicts ; the results he leaves in the keeping of God.

But weak as we are, our strength fails when we are confronted by the dreariness of this march. We find that the cheerless insistence upon the means leaves us despairing of our own weakness. So we turn to Gandhi with the question : Is it wrong to be intoxicated with a dream and a hope when darkness presses upon our soul from all around ? Gandhi answers : Indeed, you should believe in the promise of the day when man shall disdain to enrich himself at the cost of his neighbour and all will live in work and love ; but in the meanwhile take care of the means.

Secretly, to the chosen few who can bear it, he whispers a less luring truth. To them Gandhi says that the promise of the dawn is but the bait with which God tempts His creatures into action, along paths which He chooses. And if He so wills, He may any day sweep aside all our hopes and joys and hurl us into the depth of unutterable misery, for He is, above all, the greatest tyrant ever known. Our business is to toil unceasingly at our appointed task, and throw ourselves against every obstacle which oppresses human life, without regard to consequences. We belong to the gang of workmen employed to keep the road ready for God's chariot to pass by. Even with regard to his motherland, he says that it is true he wants his countrymen to enjoy political freedom, he wants food and raiment for the hungry millions ; but these are only the things with which India will clothe herself before she is called upon, in the interest of humanity, to embrace Death as her divine bridegroom. "My idea of nationalism is that my country may become free that, if need be, the whole country may die, so that the human races may live."

These are indeed awful words. But Gandhi consoles us by

saying that the powers of patience which lie within the soul are unlimited. If we throw aside all our attachment to the body, which is the source of all fear, and have our being in God, who is the repository of all strength, we shall never lack in the necessary courage to bear His message of love in our lives.

This is the prospect which Gandhi holds out to his comrades ; no vision of any distant millenium, but only a vision of the thorns which we shall encounter in our pilgrim's march. He shows us only the way, even while seeking it himself, whereby we can lay down our lives so that humanity may live. And in that path God himself is transformed into the Flaming Sword which leaps and plays over the road of thorns. The sole aim of our existence is to surrender ourselves to that Almighty Being. Our own joys and sorrows sink into the uttermost insignificance, while life and death are transformed into so many milestones on our lonesome march.

This ultimate acceptance of the permanent nature of that which we call sorrow or suffering, and from which we instinctively shrink, does not spring in Gandhi from any inner morbidness of spirit. It comes from a recognition of the fact that both light and darkness, life and death, are parts of one Universal Being, which we may not accept in fragments. It is this aspect of Gandhi, with its apotheosis of suffering, which has drawn forth the instinctive repulsion of the poet Tagore, whose admirable temper has now and then been ruffled by the prospect of a flood of morbidity overcoming the land in the wake of Gandhi's political movement. But in Gandhi himself, there is not the least trace of morbidness for his whole soul has been bathed clean by the tears of humble admission of weakness before God.

If that be the character of the Gandhi's philosophy, devoid of hope, of romance, how is it, one may ask, that men follow him in thousands even when he asks them to follow him to the portals of death ? The secret of this lies not in the philosophy, but in the character and personality of the man. And here perhaps we reach not only the inner truth of the present revolution in India, but of all great movements in the history of the



world. Russia today is inexplicable except in terms of Lenin, the Christian movement is equally so without Jesus; while India's Satyagraha is likewise understandable principally with reference to the character of the man who leads it today.

A lone man, marching with set purpose upon the road of God, whose heart beats in tune with the suffering in every human breast, determined to share their sufferings or to sacrifice himself in opposing all that oppresses them; such a character holds an appeal far greater than the cold star of truth towards which the pilgrim may be marching himself. It is good to live at a time when such men are born on earth, for their living testimony to the might of the human spirit restores to us our own faith and gives us the strength to hope and try to build the world anew.

---

